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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving reading comprehension. The targeted population consists of first, second, third, and fourth grade classrooms in a middle class community located in a suburb of a large midwestern city. The problem regarding poor comprehension skills is evident from teacher observation, student performance, previous year teacher recommendation, and/or standardized test scores. Analysis of probable cause data reveal several issues relating to poor comprehension skills. First, students lack extra reading because they often do not read anything beyond the assigned work. Next, there are not enough age appropriate materials. Some of the reading materials are too difficult for the students to read. Also, there is a need for improved decoding skills. If students spend too much time trying to analyze the word, they do not have the ability to comprehend the information. Lastly, many students have poor attention skills. They have too many distractions, difficulty with self-control, and confusion about their purpose for school attendance. A review of solution strategies suggested by the experts and an analysis of the problem setting show the necessity for the following interventions. The teacher will read a story each day to the students. The students will retell or answer questions to show understanding and retention. The teacher will increase phonemic awareness. The students will keep chart reading records. Students will generate questions for other students to answer. Contains 55 references and 50 figures of data. Appendixes contain listening comprehension activity sheets, pretest data, story sheets with questions, surveys and data (pre and post) for home and for children, previous teacher evaluation sheets and data, record sheets, and a letter to parents. (Author/SR)

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ED 433 505

INCREASING READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

This report will describe a program for improving reading comprehension. The targeted population will consist of two first grades, one second grade, one third grade, and one fourth grade classroom in a middle class community. This community is located in a suburb of a large midwestern city. The problem regarding poor comprehension skills is evident from teacher observation, student performance, previous year teacher recommendation, and/or standardized test scores.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed several issues relating to poor comprehension skills. First, students lack extra reading because they often do not read anything beyond the assigned work. Next, there are not enough age appropriate materials. Some of the reading materials are too difficult for the students to read. Also, there is a need for improved decoding skills. If a student spends too much time trying to analyze the word, he does not have the ability to comprehend the information. Last many students have poor attention skills. They have too many distractions, difficulty with self control, and confusion about their purpose for school attendance.

A review of solution strategies suggested by the experts and an analysis of the problem setting showed the necessity for the following interventions. The teacher will read a story each day to the students. The students will retell or answer questions to show understanding and retention. The teacher will increase phonemic awareness. The students will keep chart reading records. Students will generate questions for other students to answer.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in regular education classrooms in grades one through four demonstrate poor reading comprehension. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes: teacher observation, student performance, previous year teacher recommendation, and/or standardized test scores.

Immediate Problem Context

The two sites will be considered separately, but the community information has been combined since Site A and Site B are in the same community. School A and School B belong to the same district, thus many of the programs are the same. The district's Technology Plan provides computer education in all buildings. Each building houses a computer lab in which all grade levels participate in some type of computer activity that enhances student learning. The district also uses the IBM "Writing to Write" software program in second through fourth grades. "Writing to Write" is a program designed to help children develop, analyze, and express their own ideas in an organized and sequential manner.

Project Tree (Together Reaching Educational Excellence) is the school district's gifted program. Guidelines for identifying gifted and talented students include the following criteria: parent inventory, Kingore Observation Inventory, and above average scores on the California Achievement Test in reading, math, and the cognitive skills index. Gifted and talented students are grouped in clusters of four to six students in the regular classroom. The classroom teacher differentiates the curriculum for the gifted and talented students through modification of content, process, product, or the learning environment.

The district provides a learning disability resource program for students who have been identified through a referral process. Students with English as a second language are offered services through the English as a Second Language Program. Students who are identified by the classroom teacher as having difficulties in reading or math are referred to the Project Pal (Positive Aspect of Learning) Program. This program is funded through Title I funds. The purpose of this program is to increase student achievement in reading and math. The program also strives to increase student self-esteem through small group instruction. A six week summer school program, funded through Title I funds, provides additional support for children experiencing difficulties in reading and math.

The California Achievement Test (CAT) is used to assess student achievement in second and fifth grades. The students are tested in all subject areas and the test includes a cognitive skills index. The Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) assesses student achievement in science and social studies at the fourth grade level. The IGAP assesses reading, writing, and math in third and sixth grades. All students in the district receive a quarterly progress report.

Students in kindergarten and first grade receive a teacher checklist evaluation regarding their first quarter progress. After the first quarter, kindergarten students receive letter grades consisting of S (successful), P (progressing), N (needs time or needs improvement), and a dash (area not graded this marking period). Students in first grade (second through fourth quarter) and second grade receive letter grades consisting of E (exceeds expectations), M (meets expectations), and I (improvement needed). Students in grades four through six receive letter grades consisting of A (excellent work), B (good work), C (satisfactory work), D (unsatisfactory work), and F (failing work). An asterisk * next to the grade indicates a modified program. Midquarter reports are sent home for unsatisfactory work.

The district allows three parent-teacher conference days throughout the school year. The first conference is required and, the subsequent conference days are scheduled if needed or requested by the parent. The parents or guardians of 100% of the students in Site A and Site B made at least one contact with the students' teachers during the 1996-97 school year (Site A and B Report Card, 1997).

The school district follows a six day schedule. This was implemented in order to avoid missing certain subjects every time there is a Monday holiday. This schedule enables students to receive two 40 minute sessions of physical education, two 40 minute sessions of music, two 40 minute sessions of art, one 40 minute session of library, and one to three 40 minute sessions of computers (depending on the grade level) during a six day schedule.

The district has adopted Harcourt Brace for reading/language and spelling. This integrated reading and language arts program meets the individual needs of each learner through a wide variety of instructional activities. The program integrates listening, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, and thinking through its instruction. Daily Oral Language (D.O.L.) is used to supplement the integrated reading and language arts program. D.O.L. reinforces the proper usage of language mechanics and sentence structure.

The district has adopted Silver Burdett-Ginn for math in grades kindergarten through six. The math series provides opportunities for students to experiment and investigate through open-ended problems. It develops thinking and reasoning skills through the use of manipulatives. Math Their Way instruction and activities supplement the kindergarten through second grade math curriculum. Daily Oral Math (D.O.M.) is utilized for students to discover that there is more than one way to approach a problem. It emphasizes higher order thinking skills.

The social studies series is MacMillan McGraw-Hill. This program provides ample opportunities to use cooperative learning. The school district is currently in the process of evaluating and adopting a new series. The science curriculum utilizes the Silver Burdett-Ginn series. This program engages students in active investigations of scientific concepts. The program provides students with many opportunities to develop their own knowledge of science through hands-on activities.

Sites A and B have very active Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). The PTA provides funds and services to the classroom teacher and school through fund raisers such as the monthly Market Day sales, award ceremonies, field trips, school spirit day activities, assemblies, holiday parties, and student and teacher appreciation weeks.

Site A

Site A is located in a suburb of a large midwestern metropolitan area. The building houses children from kindergarten through sixth grade. The total student population is 403 children. The racial-ethnic background is 88.6% White, 5% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 2.5% Asian/Pacific Islander. There are 10.7% low income families and 3.2% of students are from limited English proficient families. The rate of attendance at Site A is 95.6%, with a student mobility rate of 8.2%. There is no chronic truancy at this school.

The average class size for kindergarten is 23.0, grade one is 22.3, grade three is 26.5, grade six is 31.5. The staff at Site A is comprised of twenty female and five male teachers with one administrator. Of these teachers, 73.1% have a Master's Degree. The average teaching experience is 9.81 years. The students are in controlled heterogeneously assigned classrooms. The core subject areas and time devoted to them are as follows: mathematics, 60 minutes; science, 30 minutes in third grade and 40 minutes in sixth grade; English, 150 minutes in third grade and 130 minutes in sixth grade; social science, 30 minutes in third grade and 40 minutes in sixth grade. In addition to core subjects, students also receive two 40 minute periods of physical education, two 40 minute periods of music, two 40 minute periods of art, and two 40 minute periods of computers each week (Site A Report Card, 1997).

Site A houses the self contained learning disability classrooms for the entire district. The first self contained classroom has kindergarten students. In this classroom there is one certified teacher, one aide with a bachelor of science in nursing, and one classroom aide. The second self contained classroom has students in grades one through three. In this classroom there is one certified teacher and one classroom aide. The third self contained classroom contains students in fourth through sixth grades. In this classroom, there is one certified teacher and one classroom aide.

The principal of Site A gives the students an opportunity to receive recognition for good behavior. This award is called Power of Positive Students (P.O.P.S.). When a student demonstrates a positive behavior, he is given a P.O.P.S. slip to put into a weekly classroom drawing for a free McDonald's treat.

At the first grade level, the teachers choose a different student in their classrooms to be the student of the week. This child is interviewed about his likes and dislikes. One of the honors this student has is being able to bring in something to show the class. In addition, the first grade teachers designate a student to be the reader of the week. This student brings in a book to read to the class and then to the principal. The students and teachers in first and third grades participate in reading buddies. This is where the third grade children work with the first grade children in some sort of activity designed around a book. The third grade students may read to a first grade student and then when the first graders are ready they may read to their third grade buddy.

Furthermore, the principal at Site A provides a Principal's Luncheon for the fifth and sixth graders. Any fifth or sixth grade student on the honor roll for a quarter is given a McDonald's lunch provided by the principal. This is an extra incentive to earn the privilege and remain on the honor roll. There is also an Education Fair every spring. This is where families may do a project to be exhibited the night of the Ice Cream Social and Education Fair.

Site B

Site B is located in a suburb outside a large midwestern metropolitan area. The building houses children from kindergarten through sixth grade. The total population is 372 children. Eighty-nine and five tenths percent of the schools population is White, 5.9% are Hispanic, 2.7% are Black, and 1.9% are Asian/Pacific Islander. Seven and eight tenths percent of the students are from low income families. Eight tenths percent of the students are limited English proficient. The rate of attendance at Site B is 95.5% with a student mobility rate of 5.7%. The chronic truancy rate is zero. The average class size for kindergarten is 17.3 students, grade one is 19.7 students, grade three is 19.3 students, and grade six is 26 students. The staff at Site B is comprised of nineteen female and five male teachers, with one administrator. Of these teachers 71% have their Master's Degree. The average teaching experience is 12.6 years.

The students are heterogeneously grouped. However, other factors are taken into account such as gifted clusters, personality conflicts, and behavioral issues. The core subject areas and time devoted to them are as follows: mathematics, 60 minutes; science, 30 minutes in third grade and 40 minutes in sixth grade; English, 150 minutes in third grade and 130 minutes in sixth grade; social science, 30 minutes in third grade and 40 minutes in sixth grade. In addition to core subjects, students also receive two 40 minute periods of physical education, two 40 minute periods of music, two 40 minute periods of art, and two 40 minute periods of computers each week (Site B Report Card, 1997).

Site B has a very active student council who plan weekly and monthly activities to promote school spirit. On Halloween, the students have an all school parade. Weather permitting, the students and teachers walk around a four block area. Many of the residents come out to watch all the children in costume. The primary grades study and celebrate a Thanksgiving unit with a yearly reenactment of the First Thanksgiving. There is also a musical production at Christmas and a celebration of 100 days of school. The third grade plans a nutritional buffet and the fourth grade has a manners luncheon. The upper grades participate in the DARE program, have a spring musical production, an awards breakfast, and a graduation/awards dinner. Included in the activities is the poetry corner at all grade levels and a science fair in fourth grade.

The Surrounding Community

Both sites are located in a village incorporated on December 20, 1893. The community of Site A and Site B is comprised of four square miles bordered on the west by a large suburb and on the east, south, and north by a large midwestern city. The population is 20,874. It is known as the "Village of Churches" because of the thirteen religious organizations serving the area. The majority of residents work in the city. Transportation is easily accessible through excellent rail, bus, and expressway services. It is a low to average income area with 61% being blue collar workers. The racial and ethnic climate of the community is changing to include an increase of Hispanics and Blacks (Community A and B Census, 1990).

In the community 95.1% of the population is White, 2.9% is Hispanic, 1.3% is Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.6% of the population is Black, and all other is 0.1%. Of the 1,838 students enrolled in the elementary school district 92.3% are White, 3.5% are Hispanic, 2.2% are Black, 1.9% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% are Native American. There are 10.7% from lower income families and 1.7% are from limited English proficient families. One hundred percent of the teachers in the district are White. Female teachers make up 87.6% and male teachers make up 12.4% of the teaching staff. The average years of teaching experience in the district is 11.8 years with an average salary of $37,535. The pupil - teacher ratio is 20.8:1. Teachers with a Master's Degree and beyond make up 66.7% of the total of 105 teachers. The administrators have an average salary of $62,037, and the pupil - administrator ratio is 204.2:1 (Site A and B Report Cards, 1997).

There are many large businesses and banks that employ, provide services, and pay taxes. The largest tax base is a shopping plaza that provides tax money for the schools. Also, there is a large hospital that hires many local residents (Community A and B Census, 1990).

Four elementary, one junior high, and one high school provide public education. Four Catholic elementary schools, also located in the village, provide private educational services. Two large Catholic high schools (one for boys and the other for girls), a community college, and a four year university are located in adjacent communities (Community A and B Census, 1990).

Public services provided include a full time police and fire (EMS/Paramedic 24 hour program included), and a full service library. A multipurpose community center provides services for young people (preschool through college) looking for recreation, handicapped citizens needing help, or seniors interested in activities. A food service located in the junior high school distributes food to families in need. A well known restaurant and theater is a cultural center for the village (Community A and B Census, 1990).

The average household income is $45,000. The range of home values in this village is $75,000 to $200,000. Single family homes make up a large majority of the housing with apartments and townhouses making up the remaining housing. Of the residents, 6.9% are not high school graduates, 34.2% are high school graduates, 5.5% have associate's degrees, 16.0% have bachelor's degrees, and 5.9% have higher degrees or professional training (Community A and B Census, 1990).

National Context of the Problem

Benefits of Phonics

One theory of the development of spoken language was discussed by Davis (1983), based on repeating the sounds of nature or of animals. Man tried to imitate the sounds and words were developed. People first communicated through picture writing or drawings. Since drawings were inadequate and often misunderstood, a more accurate form of communications was needed and developed. One system that evolved over 2,000 years ago was alphabet writing that was based on the sound of the spoken language. The letters were recorded in the same sequence as the sounds of the spoken word. Learning to read meant making the correct association between letters and sounds (pp. 495-496).

There are more than 3,000 different languages spoken around the world. Most of these are spoken with fewer than 50 phonemes (sounds). The phonemes are put together to produce as many as 10,000 different words (p. 495).

Early instruction in America was greatly influenced by England. Much of what was taught or read was religious in nature. A typical procedure for teaching the children the alphabetic method was to first memorize the names of the letters. Then the child had to spell and pronounce combinations of letters (2 letters, 3 letters) then monosyllabic words. Children also were taught lists of words (p.497).

In 1828, Worcester books were published. Davis' approach was a word method for teaching reading. The words were associated with pictures or objects. Students learned to recognize the words without sounding them out. Many parents were angry because their children often did not know the letters within the word or skills to attack new words. Many critics suggested phonics as a method for teaching children how to read. This debate has continued to the present day (p. 499).

Reid Lyon, a psychologist, has conducted clinics across the country and has found that children need a combination of phonics, a text that is decodable, a build up of speed so it is fluent, and rich literature to develop good reading skills that increase comprehension (American Teacher, 1998). If any of these are missing from the reading program children will not become efficient readers.

The AFT is conducting a task force on reading which will study the research on what works best. It is hoped that the 25 to 50 percent of students who have not developed that "phoneme awareness" will do so by third grade so they will not be at a disadvantage educationally for too long. Some reading programs, such as whole language, do not promote phoneme awareness. They assume the student will develop this skill naturally. The AFT is reviewing research on various reading programs so a comprehensive one can be promoted to the school districts (American Teacher, 1998).

Improvement in student reading comprehension is a nation wide concern. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) posts reading scores in the 50 states. California came up last in 1996 after it adopted a non-phonics reading program. There was much concern over the interpretation of the reading scores, possibly there needs to be a standard of evidence set so all research is judged the same way. Then policy makers, parents, and teachers will be aware of the standards that are in place. The problem might not be that the scores were really the lowest in the nation but possibly all the research is not judged in a reliable way. If a reading program works in one state, it might not necessarily work for students in a different state. Once a state considers all the criteria from different research, it will choose a program that works for the majority of the student population (American Teacher, 1998).

Whole Language

According to Davis (1993), the formal label of 'whole language' in this country dates back about 12 years, however, its roots go back to the 17th century. John Amos Comenius was an educator who believed that learning should be enjoyed by students and should be relevant to their real lives. The philosophy continues through John Dewey's theories of progressive education into the 20th century; to Friedrich Froebel, the creator of kindergartens; to Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who focused on the social aspects of learning; to Dorris Lee and Lillian Lamoreaus, who proposed a language-experience approach incorporated into the reading material; to Donald Graves the pioneer of "process writing" (p. 24). These holistic theories of learning have progressed and have been practiced in New Zealand and Australia since before World War II.

McGuinness (1997), states that over the past ten years, many schools have employed the use of whole language. What is whole language? Whole language is a method where reading is a natural process just as learning to speak is a natural process. One expert on whole language is Kenneth Goodman. He believes students come to school knowing a great deal about the meaning of words and language structure without formal instruction (p. 33).

Goodman also believes students are aware of sounds as they become more fluent in their speech. He describes how students use "cueing systems" to help with decoding and comprehending what they read. These cueing systems include semantic and syntactic clues. The students need to be exposed to good literature which uses natural language. The students listen and follow the printed word on the page as it is being read. This will enable them to read and write on their own by trial and error. Students should use context, pictures, and print instead of sounding out words letter by letter to make an intelligent guess for unknown words (p. 34).

Gursky (1991), states in his special report on whole language that proponants of this philosophy believe that the classroom should be child-centered and the lessons meaningful and relevant to the lives of children. The process of learning and the problem solving is more important than the answer itself. The components of whole language include daily journaling/letter writing along with silent and oral reading of real literature (p. 23).

The whole language debate goes beyond believing it's the most effective method of teaching reading. It questions pedagogy, purpose of schooling, and roles of students, parents, administers, and teachers.

Balanced Instruction

Teachers need to find a variety of approaches to help all students read and comprehend more accurately. Some students do not learn via the phonics approach. These students could possibly be helped by using supporting strategies such as context clues, structural clues, word form clues, and dictionary skills (The Reading Teacher, 1996). Another strategy for poor readers is a thematic word wall. This revolves around the study of themes. When studying a subject, such as forests, all forest related words are listed on a chart (word wall) under a related sound, such as long e. For example, if the word is tree, other forest related words would include: cheetah, monkey, leaf, etc. When the word wall is completed by the teacher and students, it is posted so the students can see and learn from it (Robb, 1997).

"Reading Wars" between the phonics supporters and the whole language supporters are constant. Each group wants to promote its ideology. Children learn best when phonics is combined with whole language. However, school districts have been choosing between the two, one group wants the children to just love reading and learn from reading good literature while the other group advocates the discipline of phonics and that reading does not have to be enjoyable (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997).

One ideology does not meet the needs of all students. States are discovering that research shows one ideology does not have an edge over the other. Good readers benefit from phonics and decoding skills in combination with entertaining stories and good literature. That is the decision school districts must adopt (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997). Providing a relaxing, literature-rich reading environment, giving students a wide-range of reading choices, providing sufficient modeling, selecting phonics at the right time period (when students are developmentally ready), and using many techniques to improve reading styles (Carbo, 1997).

Packaged Programs

Some students in the primary grades need a more intense reading program. A program called Reading Recovery is being used in many school districts. Reading Recovery is an early intervention program developed by Marie Clay. It is an intensive reading program that strives to bring the lowest achieving readers in first grade to an average reading level ability. Students who qualify for the intervention program receive individualized instruction for 30 minutes each day. The program utilizes five components: reading books familiar to the student; taking a running record on the book used the day before; using and working with magnetic letters; writing sentences, then cutting up and reassembling the sentences; and reading a new book. The individualized program runs 12 to 16 weeks (Barnes, 1996-1997). Many school districts use this program for the lowest 20% of the students. Many studies indicate it is working very well (Moriarty, 1997). Ohio State University completed a study on the effectiveness of Reading Recovery in June, 1991, when compared to other instructional models, Reading Recovery students performed significantly better than an equivalent control group and three other special groups (Barnes, 1996-1997).

Maria Carbo is Executive Director of the National Reading Styles Institute. She believes that no single approach to reading is advisable. Different learning styles or reading instruction are necessary to accommodate the variety of learners within the classroom. Her research advocates selecting approaches best suited for the student. We are constantly searching for the single best way to teach reading. Failure exists within all popular methods. When this happens, the pendulum swings the other way and a completely new approach is adopted. Her program, Reading Styles Program, promises high, rapid reading gains, effective instructional strategies, and highly motivated teachers/students (Carbo, 1996).

Duffy-Hester (1997), wrote an article examining model reading programs for students who struggle in reading. In her article, she discussed Slavin's Success for All programs. Slavin, along with Madden, Dolan, and Wasik have developed a model reading program that strives to improve the reading growth of students who are experiencing reading difficulty in the classroom. The model reading program is known as Success for All (SFA). Reading improvement is achieved through restructuring the elementary school's curriculum. The SFA program incorporates the use of tutoring; family support services; and instruction in reading/writing proficiency, math skills, science, and social studies (p. 485).

The Success for All program consists of three basic reading components. The first component is the preschool or early kindergarten program. This component focuses on the development and use of language. Use of thematic units, learning centers, and specific reading instruction help to develop the students' language skills (p.486).

The second component is known as the Beginning Reading or Reading Roots program which is utilized during the second half of kindergarten and continues through the reading primer level. This component focuses on listening comprehension, language development, and "shared story" lessons. "Shared story" lessons includes rereading the story selection and using reading strategies before, during, and after reading to increase comprehension. Also, teachers with remedial or special education teaching background are made available to classroom teachers to tutor children who need additional instruction (p. 486).

The third component is known as Beyond the Basics or Reading Wings program. This component is utilized when students are reading at the first grade level and will continue to be implemented through the elementary school years. Students at this level work with partners or in cooperative groups. The students work on direct instruction in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, independent reading, and prereading strategies (p. 487).

According to Allington and Cunningham (1996), schools using the SFA program have had more students achieving at grade-level reading and writing skills. As a result of using the SFA program, schools have had less special education referrals and placements, as well as, fewer retentions at each grade level.

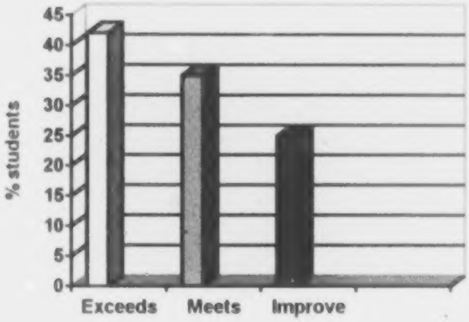
CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

According to Kropp (1993), there has been evidence dating back to early history as to why people have difficulty with reading. The instinct for reading is not a part of our genetic makeup. Learning to read is not a natural process. At one time, reading was required by only a limited portion of the population. In medieval times, kings and queens had letters and manuscripts read to them. Peasants had little reason to read. Until the nineteenth century, fewer than one person in ten was able to read. Reading, since it took place out loud, was a social event. When Charles Dickens' great novels appeared in the 1830s, they were bought in installments by families and groups of friends who might have only one "reader" among them. During the Victorian Age, as people became more proficient readers, silent reading became commonplace. In the past, reading was not a necessity; however, today it is a requirement in order to deal with modern life (pp. 2-3).

The researchers wanted to help their students become better readers. The evidence collected to document the extent of student difficulty in reading comprehension consists of the following data. The researchers used pretests and surveys. The resulting data are presented in narratives and graphs.



Tests Administered in Class

Figure 1. Auditory Comprehension

The auditory comprehension test was read to the students orally by the teacher. The questions were also read to the students. The first grade students circled their answers on paper, while the second through fourth grade students wrote their answers on paper. The targeted group consisted of 102 students. This graph shows that 41% of the students exceeded the expectations for the listening test, 34% met the expectations, and only 25% show a need for improvement. In analyzing the data, the results indicate that the "needs improvement" group might require more direction or practice in listening skills. They need more stories read to them and questions asked of them. Possibly the large number of "exceeds" students indicates that there may be a need for more challenging material (see Appendix A).

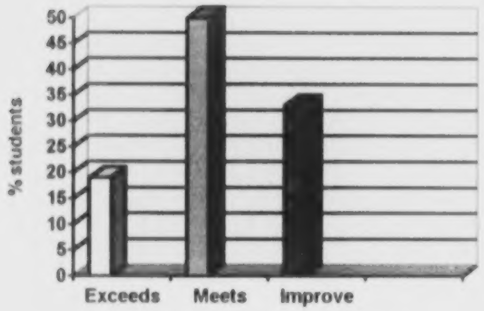


Figure 2. Holistic/Skills/Integrated Book Tests

The holistic, skills, or integrated book tests (Harcourt Brace, 1995) consisted of stories and questions in a booklet that the students had to answer. The first and second grade students had the tests read to them by the teacher, while the third and fourth grade students read their tests silently. The targeted group consisted of 102 students. This graph shows that the book test was difficult. Only 19% of the students exceeded the expectations, 49% met the expectations, and about 32% of the students needed to show improvement. According to the rubrics constructed by the publishing company, the results indicate that the students might need practice and direction in reading and comprehending stories independently. Also, these students might lack background information (see Appendix B).

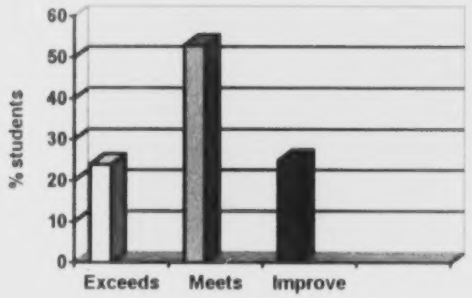


Figure 3. Teacher Made Tests

The teacher made tests were consistent with grade level reading in which the teacher chose a sample story and the students had to give free response answers. The targeted group consisted of 102 students. Results of the teacher made test showed that a little less than one-fourth of the students exceeded the expectations, a little more than one-half of the students met the expectations, and one-fourth of the students needed to show improvement. The analyzed data may show a need for more in depth types of questions for the meets and exceeds group to create more of a challenge. The "needs improvement" group may not have understood the explanation or had the time to complete the test (see Appendix C).

Of the three tests, the publisher's test had the largest number of students who needed improvement. This could be because the choices are too limiting and do not give the students a chance to express the reasons for their choices. Because it is for all children around the country, it might be more confusing for the students, since it is not tailored to them. The test is designed for children across the country and not tailored to or for a specific region. The test area in which the students did the best overall was the auditory test. Seventy-five percent met or exceeded the goal. This could be because the students really had to focus their attention on the story or because at the primary and early intermediate level they are used to working orally.

Home Survey

An initial home survey was sent home with two first grade classes, one second grade class, one third grade class, and one fourth grade class. Students were asked to participate in a research project to determine the significance of reading in the home environment. There were 99 responses, out of 102, to the survey. The parents/guardians were to respond to each of the ten questions as accurately as possible (see Appendix D).

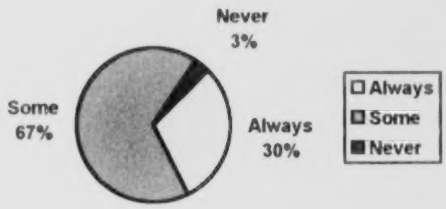


Figure 4. Your child reads at home for pleasure

For the first question of the survey, Does you child read at home for pleasure? almost one-third of the parents responded that their children always read for pleasure; more than two-thirds of the parents responded that their children sometimes read for pleasure; and three-hundredths of the parents responded that their children never read for pleasure.

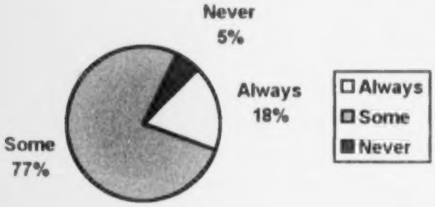


Figure 5. Your child reads to you

For the second question of the survey, Does you child read to you? almost one-fifth of the parents responded that their children always read to them; three-fourths of parents responded that their children sometimes read to them; and one-twentieth of parents said that their children never read to them. This question leads the teachers to believe that a majority of the children do not read to their parents frequently enough.

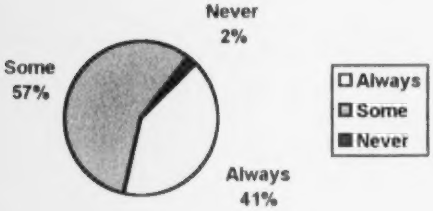


Figure 6. You read to your child

For the third question of the survey, Do you read to your child? two-fifths of the parents always read to their children; a little more than one-half of the parents sometimes read to their children; and two-hundredths of the parents indicated that they never read to their children.

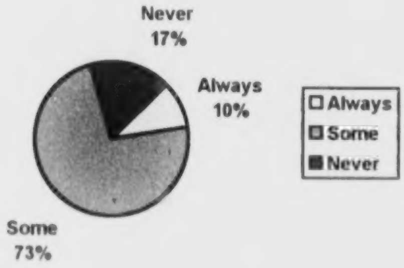


Figure 7. Your child prefers to read by himself/herself

For the fourth question of the survey, Does your child prefer reading by himself/herself? one-tenth of the parents indicated that their children always prefer to read to themselves; almost three-fourths of the parents indicated that their children sometimes read to themselves; and a little less than one-fifth of the parents indicated that their children never read to themselves.

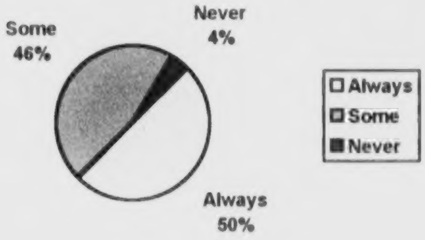


Figure 8. Your child tries to sound out words that he/she does not know

For the fifth question of the survey, Does your child try to sound out words that he/she doesn't know? one-half of the parents believe their children always try to sound out words they do not know; while a little less than one-half of the parents believe that their children sometimes try to sound out words they do not know; and four-hundredths of the parents believe that their children never try to sound out words they do not know.

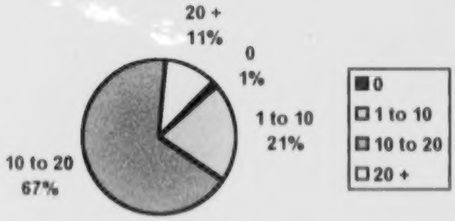


Figure 9. Your child sets aside some time to read for enjoyment each night

For the sixth question of the survey, Approximately how much time does your child read for enjoyment each night? one-tenth of children read for 20 or more minutes each night; two-thirds of the children read from 10 to 20 minutes each night; one-fifth of the children read from 1 to 10 minutes each night; and one-hundredths of the children do not read at all each night.

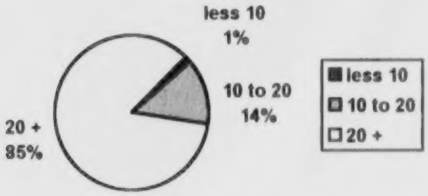


Figure 10. Your child has children's books at home

For the seventh question of the survey, How many children's books do you have at home? four-fifths of the parents have more than 20 children's books at home; a little more than one-tenth of the parents have 10 to 20 children's books at home; and one-hundredths of the parents have less than 10 children's books in their home.

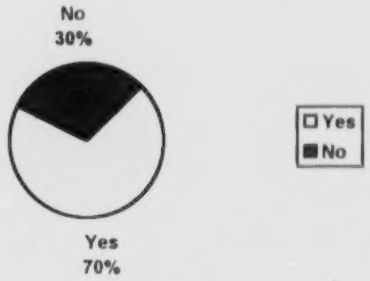


Figure 11. Your child has a library card

For the eighth question of the survey, Does your child have a library card? 70% of the children have their own library card, while 30% of the children do not have their own library card.

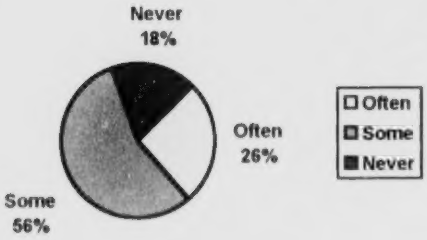


Figure 12. Your child visits the library

For the ninth question of the survey, How often does your child go to the library? one-fourth of the parents say that their children go to the library often; more than one-half of the parents say that their children sometimes go to the library; and almost one-fifth of the parents say that their children never go to the library.

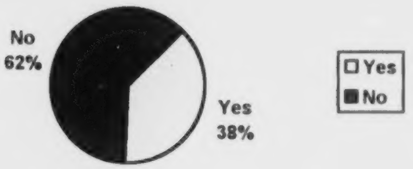


Figure 13. Your child has a favorite author

For the tenth question of the survey, Does your child have a favorite author? a little more than one-third of the parents believe their children do have a favorite author and three-fifths of the parents say that their children do not have a favorite author.

Child's Survey

An initial children's reading survey was given to two first grade classes, one second grade class, one third grade class, and one fourth grade class. The questions were read to the students and the students were asked to answer honestly. The first and second grade children's survey had picture answers to choose from, but the third and fourth grade children's survey had word answers to choose from. The targeted group had to circle the answers. There were 102 responses out of 102 children that are participating in the action research (see Appendix E).

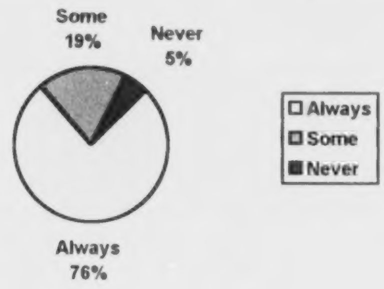


Figure 14. You enjoy listening to a story

For the first question of the survey, Do you enjoy listening to a story? more than three-fourths of the students indicated that they always enjoy listening to a story, approximately one-fifth of the students sometimes enjoy listening to a story, while one-twentieth of the students never enjoy listening to a story.

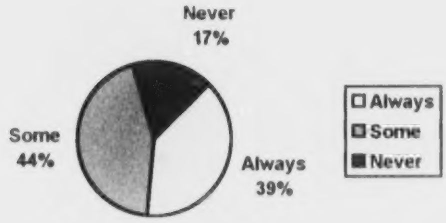


Figure 15. You read every night

For the second question of the survey, Do you read every night? two-fifths of the students always read every night, almost one-half of the students sometimes read each night, while approximately one-fifth of the students never read at night.

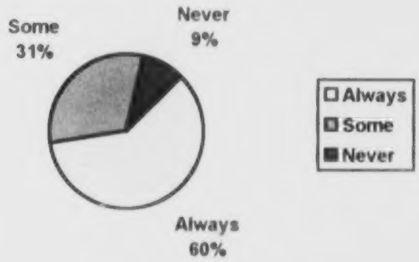


Figure 16. You like reading

For the third question of the survey, Do you like reading? three-fifths of the students always enjoy reading, one-third of the students sometimes like to read, and one-tenth of the students never like to read.

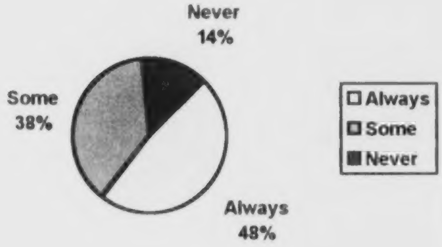


Figure 17. You have someone at home read to you

For the fourth question of the survey, Does anyone at home read to you? almost one-half of the students say that someone reads to them at home, two-fifths of the students indicated that sometimes they are read to at home, and almost three-twentieths of the students indicated that they are never read to at home.

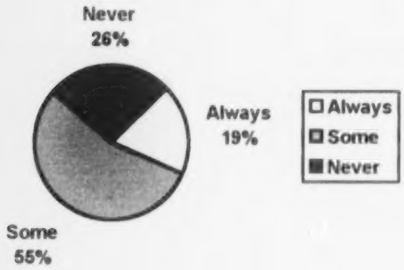


Figure 18. You find a lot of books too hard for you to read

For the fifth question of the survey, Are a lot of books too hard for you to read? one-fifth of students indicated that many books are too hard for them, more than one-half of the students indicated that some books are too hard for them, and approximately one-fourth of the students indicated that many books are not too hard for them.

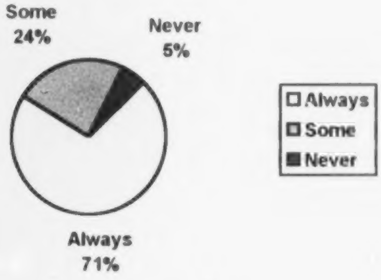


Figure 19. You try to sound out words that you do not know

For the sixth question of the survey, Do you try to sound out words that you don't know? almost three fourths of the students indicated that they always try to sound out words when they do not know them, almost one-fourth of the students said they sometimes try to sound out words they do not know, and one-twentieth of the students said they never try to sound out words they do not know.

Previous Teacher Evaluation

A previous teacher evaluation survey was given to three teachers of 54 students who are presently in first and second grade. The previous year's teachers evaluated each individual child whom they had taught. These teachers reflected on students' performance for the 1997-1998 school year. The information was used as a basis for reading comprehension concerns (see Appendix F).

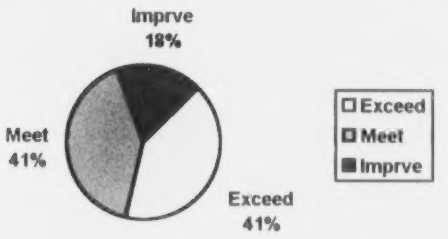


Figure 20. The student had good listening skills

For the first question of the evaluation, Did the student have good listening skills (attentive during reading of a story)? about four-fifths of the targeted students exceeded or met expectations in the area of good listening skills, while one-fifth of the targeted students needed improvement in the area of good listening skills.

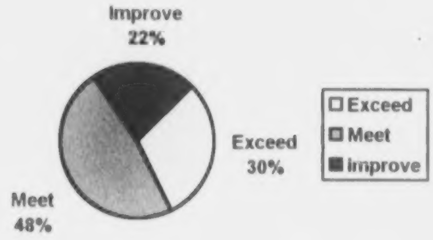


Figure 21. The student answered oral comprehension questions clearly so the other students could understand

For the second question of the evaluation, Did the student answer oral comprehension questions clearly so the other students could understand? about three-tenths of the targeted students exceeded expectations while approximately one-half of the students met expectations in the area of answering oral comprehension questions clearly. Another one-fifth of the students needed improvement.

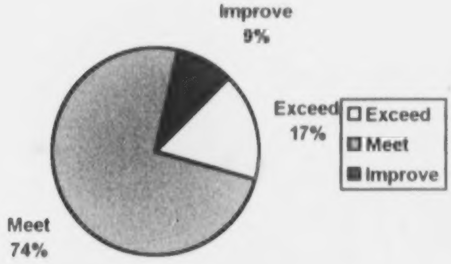


Figure 22. The student was able to sequence events from the story

For the third question of the evaluation, Was the student able to sequence events from the story? almost one-fifth of the targeted students exceeded expectations while three-fourths of the students met expectations in the area of story sequencing. Another one-tenth of the students needed improvement.

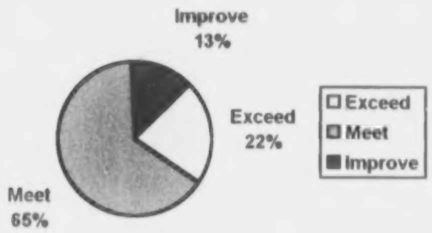


Figure 23. The student understood the question posed to him/her or needed further explanation

For the fourth question of the evaluation, Did the student understand the question posed to him/her or did he/she need it to be explained further? about two-tenths of the targeted students exceeded expectations in the area of understanding the posed question. Approximately two-thirds met the goal. While slightly over one-tenth of the students needed improvement.

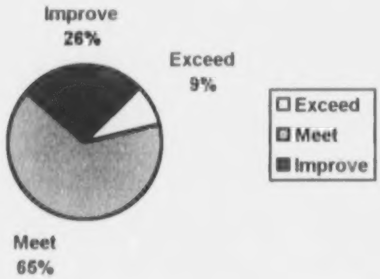


Figure 24. The student answered interpretive questions correctly

For the fifth question of the evaluation, Did the student answer interpretive questions correctly? about three-fourths of the targeted students exceeded or met expectations in the area of correctly answering interpretive questions, while one-fourth of the student needed improvement in this area.

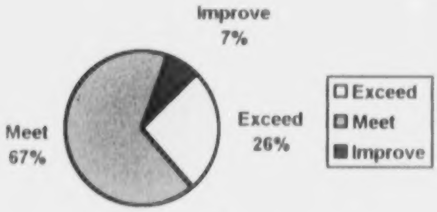


Figure 25. The student was able to give literal answers

For the sixth question of the evaluation, Was the student able to give literal answers? about one-fourth of the targeted students exceeded expectations in the area of giving literal answers, while another two-thirds of the students met expectations. Less than one-tenth of the students needed improvement.

A previous teacher evaluation survey was given to 6 teachers of 39 third and fourth grade students. The previous year's teacher evaluated each individual child that they had taught. These teachers reflected on the students performance for the previous year (1997-1998 school year). The information was used as a basis for reading comprehension concerns (see Appendix F).

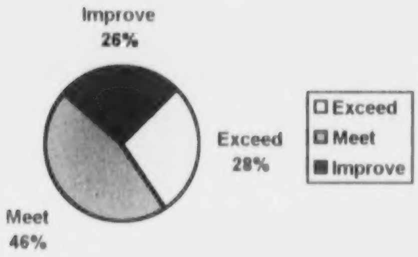


Figure 26. The student had good listening skills

For the first question of the evaluation, Did the student have good listening skills (attentive during reading of the story)? about one-fourth of the students exceeded in the area of good listening skills, almost one-half of the students were in the meet expectations range, while approximately one-fourth of the students were in the improvement needed area.

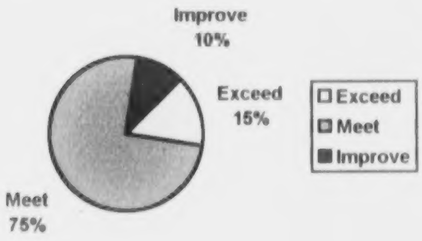


Figure 27. The student answered comprehension questions (orally) clearly so that the other students could understand

For the second question of the evaluation, Did the student answer comprehension questions (orally) clearly so the other students could understand? about one-fifth of the students exceeded in the area of oral comprehension responses, three-fourths of the students were in the meet expectations range in their responses to questions, while one-tenth of the students needed improvement when responding to reading comprehension questions.

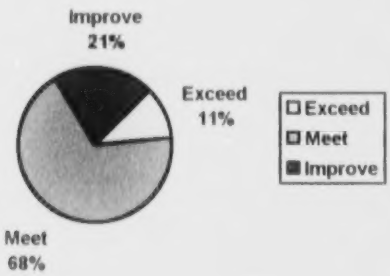


Figure 28. The student answered questions (written) to the point and sensibly

For the third question of the evaluation, Did the student answer questions (written) to the point and sensibly? one-tenth of the students were able to answer written reading comprehension questions in the exceeds expectations range, two-thirds of the students answered the questions in the meet expectations ability range, while about one-fourth of the students had difficulty and were in the improvement needed range.

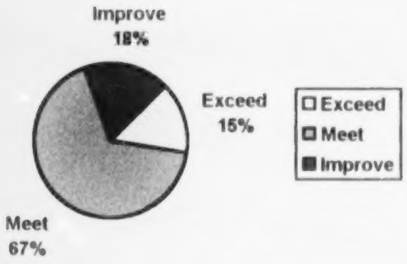


Figure 29. The student understood the questions posed to him/her or needed further explanation

For the fourth question of the evaluation, Did the student understand the question posed to him/her, or did he/she need it to be explained further? one-fifth of the students were in the exceeds expectations range in their ability to understand when asked a reading comprehension question, two-thirds of the students were in the meet expectations range in their ability to understand questions, while a little more than one-fifth of the students needed improvement or further explanation when asked reading comprehension questions.

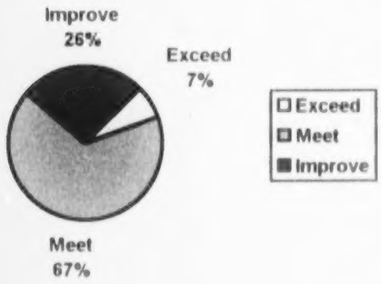


Figure 30. The student answered interpretive questions correctly

For the fifth question of the evaluation, Did the student answer interpretive questions correctly? one-tenth of the students were in the exceed expectations range when asked interpretive questions, two-thirds of the students were in the meet expectations range when asked interpretive questions, while one-fourth of the students needed improvement when asked interpretive questions.

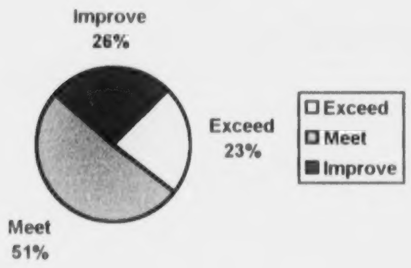


Figure 31. The student knew how to find (skim for) literal answers

For the sixth question of the evaluation, Did the student know how to find (skim for) literal answers? one-fourth of the students were in the exceed expectations area in their ability to skim for literal answers, one-half of the students were in the meet expectations area in their ability to skim for answers, while one-fourth of the students needed improvement in their ability to skim for literal answers.

The reading comprehension problem as documented in graphs and narration shows that teachers need to discover the probable causes of the reading comprehension problem and develop some possible solutions to meet the needs of these students.

Areas of concern from the student survey include:

- approximately one-fifth of the students do not read every night.

- approximately two-thirds of the students do not enjoy reading.
- approximately two-thirds of the students have at times experienced difficulty with the level of reading material.

The parent survey did not show any areas of concern in their child's reading abilities.

Areas of concern for the previous teacher evaluation:

- approximately one-fourth of students lack good listening skills (non-attentive during the reading of stories).
- approximately one-fifth of the students could not answer written reading comprehension questions to the point and sensibly.
- approximately one-fifth of the students needed questions reworded or further explained.
- approximately one-fourth of the students were not able to answer interpretive questions.
- approximately one-fourth of the students were not able to search for literal answers.

Probable Causes

There are many causes for children's difficulties with reading comprehension. Some of the causes cited in this research focus on four reasons. Children lack enough outside (or non-assigned) reading time (Taberski, 1997). Many students are reading books that are too easy or too difficult for their abilities (Fry, 1992). Students who have poor decoding skills cannot comprehend what they have read (Flesch, 1981). Finally, children who have difficulty paying attention to what they are reading cannot understand, remember, or relate to others what they have read (Flood, 1984). If teachers can recognize these underlying causes in determining the students' difficulty with reading comprehension, then these causes can be used to change programs and strategies that will in turn develop solutions for this major problem in our schools.

First, in promoting reading for pleasure or knowledge, we must encourage and help children choose books they will enjoy. The students have difficulty choosing books for their own enjoyment. According to Weiner (1990), children jump into reading without much thought to the selection. They cannot make progress because concepts, details, and vocabulary are often too advanced. Children do not know how to preview a book. They do not know how to look at the table of contents, use the preface to understand the author's reasons for writing, and read the introduction which may state the problem thus providing background information. Children need guidance in library skills in order to find books of interest.

According to Page and Pinnell (1979), if children have made up their minds that reading is boring, teachers need to provide experiences that will enable them to know reading can be fun, and that they will enjoy certain types of literature. Exposure to fantasy, poetry, biographies, and science fiction allows the children to expand their interests. Children need to read far better than they do. Good literature has not been promoted. Because of that students do not enjoy reading and therefore do not acquire the interest that will lead to life-long learning (Routman, 1991). Schools have not enriched reading which is a basic skill started in the early ages. Children are unfamiliar with expository prose and have not been led from narrative to concrete processes. According to Klein (1988), if we wish our students to be the most effective readers possible, then we must include direct instruction in our reading program (narration and exposition). This means children have not had exposure to descriptive, expository, reasoning, and argument, that evolves into abstract exposition (Flood, 1984).

According to Flood (1984), success at understanding stories depends on reading at optimal speed in order to hold interest. In other words, if children lose interest, they do not want to continue to read. According to Lyon (1998), after phonics is mastered children must build up their speed and be able to read more automatically (p.2). Also, this is supported by Stanovich (1980), who emphasizes the need of rapid and automatic context free word recognition for successful reading (p. 619).

Readability of books has long term effects on students. Difficulty of text has an impact on comprehension and developing reading ability (Flood, 1984). Students who find reading easy will read more often than children who do not. Practice makes the difference in improving their ability (Educational Research Report—Internet). Students will read with better fluency through continued practice which makes readability an achievable goal.

To grow in reading ability, students must be exposed to literature that challenges their developmental level (Flood, 1984).

> But reading instruction doesn't stop with phonics and basal readers. It must include storytelling and writing, a deep exploration of the treasure chest of rich and challenging children's literature, and literacy-related activities that can help enhance children's love of books and of learning. In short, good reading instruction included a solid grounding in basic decoding skills, enhanced by rich literature. (p.12)
>
> ("What works for reading." American Teacher 1998, March)

According to Kropp (1993), many activities compete for and take priority over reading. Some readers lose interest in reading as they get older. Most families know that reading books out loud is very important for young children. Family time spent reading together declines rapidly as children get older. Parents are too busy or too tired. It is easier to turn on the television or put in a video. Some children would rather hang out with their friends or play without adult supervision. Children are involved in organized sports and different types of lessons that often do not allow for time to just sit back and read. Parents sense that children are overloaded and there is no free time. Besides homework, extracurricular and social activities fill their lives: sports, theatricals, field trips, clubs, parties, and more are used as a safeguard against boredom (Diller, 1998). Kropp (1993) states that unless time for reading is set aside, it becomes lost in our hectic routines of visiting or playing with friends, watching television, practicing a sport, or doing homework.

Television has so many news, educational, and informative programs that, for many children, has eliminated the need to read for factual information.

TV-Free America, an organization that encourages television limitations, did a study in 19 classrooms in seven states (400 children participated). The study began with class discussions of the effects of excessive television watching on students in their families. Students evaluated the role television plays in their lives. Parental participation was encouraged and reading diaries were kept. Sixty-eight percent demonstrated improved attitudes toward reading when they were finished. In a classroom experiment with limiting the amount of television watching, reading scores rose dramatically. Students in a Title I class averaged a year's worth of growth in 10 weeks. Kids were replacing the television with reading on an average of three or four hours a day (Ashley, 1998).

On the negative side, only 34% of the study of nine year olds reported reading books, magazines or newspapers weekly. Only 54% of nine years olds read for fun everyday. Only 27% of nine year olds read at least four different types of materials. Students who watched a great deal of television had lower achievement scores ("Meeting Goal 3", 1992). In 1990, 62% of nine year olds watched television for three hours a day, up from 55% in 1982. Some reported watching television for six hours a day. Accounting for six hours in school and six hours of television and sleeping eight to ten hours that leaves only two to four hours a day for meals, sports, play, homework, and extracurricular reading (Education Research Report, 1992).

Gardner's study showed that television children can not go beyond the picture to pay attention to audio or to connect what they have learned to their own real-life experiences (as cited in Anderson and Wilkins, 1998). Harvard

University's Project Zero discovered children remember stories better if the stories are read to them rather than seen on television (Anderson and Wilkins, 1998).

If children can get early exposure to books, pictures, print, and reading, they will choose to read over other activities. Killeseid and Strickland (1989) explain that young children do not adequately read and retell stories to keep their interest in books alive. If young readers do not have the opportunity to browse for and select books, then they will not be motivated or develop a positive orientation to literacy. They should *want* to read. Parents need to continue to read to their children. They are not modeling reading in front of their own children, or providing quiet time and space for leisure reading (Routman, 1991).

Many children have come to expect instant response or gratification that reading does not provide. To really enjoy reading, children must have the time to "get into" the story, let their imagination take over, and reflect on what has been read. This does not happen instantly, as in video games, remote control activities, or any other short term experience. Many pediatricians are now taking a media history of their patients and considering the effects of television in their evaluations of problems in school performance, agitation, aggression, and problems with concentration (Anderson and Wilkins, 1998). According to Sheila Nielsea (1998), a teacher at Waldorf School in New York, children's brains are being programmed to seven minute time slots. Most programs run for seven minutes and then have a commercial break. Children are being programmed to concentrate for just a short length of time (Anderson and Wilkins, 1998). White (1998) states that children come to school with a set of strategies they learned from electronic systems that do not apply to the classroom setting. "I don't think they know when to listen" (Anderson and Wilkins, 1998).

Many parents have not encouraged their children to read. They have neglected to provide a variety of reading materials and set a good example by reading themselves. They have also neglected helping children to use their free time in constructive ways, including monitoring television viewing (Routman, 1991).

Page and Pinnell (1979) cite that children need to internalize their thinking when reading and reflecting. Teachers cannot control students' thinking or make them think the thoughts that are necessary for comprehending. Yet, teachers should allow students time to reflect and enjoy the stories they have read. If teachers can provide those experiences that promote reflection, then children will be able to internalize more of what they have read and receive gratification from the reading.

Difficulty attending to main points, excluding trivia, and evaluating what is important in the selection contribute to poor reading comprehension (Flood, 1984). For years, students were programmed to give instant rote answers. Teachers do not allow enough "wait" time for reflection. Enough time is not given to read critically, answer in discussion groups, and follow modeling techniques. Teachers have not given the students the message that they are to contribute to and take charge of continuing discussions (Routman, 1991).

The second probable cause is that many students lack age appropriate and interesting materials. The vocabulary in the basal reader can be too easy (not challenging) or too difficult so students give up. As Fry (1992) explains, teachers need to match and select the proper reading materials so students do not find the books too "babyish" and become bored or so difficult that all their energy is spent decoding and there is none left for comprehension.

Since children are reading less, it comes as no surprise that the written vocabulary of the average child has shrunk from 25,000 words to 10,000 words in less than 50 years (Anderson and Wilkins, 1998).

Children who stop reading fall behind their classmates. They do not have enough extra reading time in a day, about 20 minutes, to prevent a decline in their reading skills (Kropp, 1993).

According to Taberski (1997), books that are too difficult hinder comprehension by making the child rely on letter sounds to figure out words. Phonetic strategies are important; however, young readers need to know about and practice other strategies too.

Many stories are too sophisticated, and children do not have the personal experience or prior knowledge to understand some of this literature. If children have a negative association with reading or fail to comprehend what they have read, it could be for two reasons according to Fry (1992). One reason is that stories may lack high interest and good literary style. The other reason is that the content may not match the students' backgrounds or be culturally appropriate. Therefore the students can not make any connection with the characters, setting, and plot. Literature discussion groups should give all students the opportunity to give opinions or facts about the story. The discussion goes beyond the literal to inferential (critical) thinking (Routman, 1991). Cooper (1986) related children develop a schemata through experiences. If students have limited experience with a topic, there is not enough schemata to recall and/or comprehend. Research shows that "the reader's background information greatly influences comprehension" (p. 5).

Much information is given to the reader before he even begins to read the text. Chelsa (1997), suggests that the pre-text features are not being used when selecting a book in order to better understand what the text is all about. Without utilizing the pre-text features, readers might not become interested or motivated in reading the text. Flood (1984) states that the reader needs to make himself aware of the purpose or main idea of his book selection. Unless there is an interaction between the reader and the book, the reading material cannot be comprehended.

Many parents lack the ability to help guide their children to choose books. These parents rarely recommend good titles and authors for their children within the proper age group (Routman, 1991). Children need help in keeping an interest in reading. Without help they will not become readers for life (Kropp, 1993). Many children do not know what to look for in selecting a book, so when they choose a book because of the length, amount or size of type, or pictures they are often disappointed when they begin to read and the story does not hold their interest.

Another reason it is difficult to match the children to the right literature is because it involves knowing the students as readers and knowing the books to offer them. If children choose books that challenge and interest them, they will spend more time reading, view learning to read well as an achievable goal, and use different reading strategies to achieve that goal (Taberski, 1997). "Further exacerbating the problem is the fact that less skilled readers often find themselves in materials that are too difficult for them" (Allington, 1977, 1983, 1984; Gambrell, Wilson, & Gantt 1981).

The third probable cause for students' lack of comprehension is poor decoding skills. According to Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1984), many ideologies have downplayed phonics as "drill and kill". However, research has shown that children who are taught phonics at an early age have a better start in learning to read, especially on tests for word identification, sentences, and story comprehension.

According to Cunningham and Stanovich (1998), children have difficulty using and practicing decoding skills which results in less involvement in reading activities. It slows down the fluency of word recognition, and therefore, the cognitive resources which should be used for comprehending have been drained which causes reading for meaning to decrease.

Research shows that some children hear the sounds differently therefore, they pronounce them differently. Auditory processing is an important part of phonetic awareness (McGuinness, 1997). If phonics is a problem in reading, then strategies to strengthen context clue skills will help improve comprehension. According to Klein (1988), emphasis was placed on phonics instruction in grades kindergarten through grade two. However, little or no attention was given to comprehension at those levels. Comprehension was not being developed in our early grade reading programs. Using the shape and the length of the word combined with the renaming words and pictures, enables the students to decipher the word. "Readers should guess whole words in context and work at what makes sense rather than sounding out letter by letter" (McGuinness, 1997).

Finally, the fourth cause is that many students have poor attention skills. There are so many distractions, such as television and video games, that students have trouble concentrating. Also, if reading is not a stimulating activity, children become bored. Because attention is selective and limited, other "attraction getters" can become more powerful than the target intended, and children assume they can pay attention to target instruction and non-target distractions at the same time and still comprehend. Most can not. (Flavell et al., 1995). If children do not understand the purpose of school and the importance of reading, they will not achieve optimum performance. Children need to understand the consequences of not actively and consciously paying attention and must be held accountable for focusing in on the targeted reading. "Paying attention can be learned" (Wilson, 1995).

In conclusion, awareness of these four concerns may help reading comprehension. Children lack outside extra reading, age appropriate materials, decoding and phonic skills, and attention skills. If the problems can be recognized and accepted, then solutions can be put into place so children can read, comprehend, and enjoy learning.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The problem of the targeted group is poor reading comprehension. This is evident in low standardized test scores and poor literal and inferential skills observed through teacher made tests and anecdotal records as listed in chapter 1. The probable causes, as documented in chapter 2, are lack of reading for pleasure, shortage of age-appropriate materials, poor decoding skills, and short attention skills. It is necessary to develop strategies that will address these causes and promote better reading comprehension.

Prior to 1970, many educators believed comprehension could not be taught and during the 1970's, inferential skills declined especially in older and brighter students. It became necessary to concentrate on building the thought processes to carry readers from the literal to the inferential. Teachers need to pay more attention to the teaching of comprehension skills. Skills should not be taught in isolation, and students need modeling in order to apply these strategies to become better readers (Klein, 1998).

First, in order to improve reading comprehension, students should be encouraged to read outside of mandatory assignments (pleasure or extra reading.) There are many ways to accomplish this. Teachers can read to their students everyday for a specified amount of time (about 10 minutes is great.) The students might predict what will happen next and answer questions or retell the story the next day. Children need to have opportunities to retell stories which help to improve their memory and comprehension. Students can follow through on their own at night.

Even though many children are capable of reading on their own in their second year and beyond, parents should still read with the children each night. This gives the child one-on-one attention, a special time with parents, and develops vocabulary and builds background knowledge. Reading 10-15 minutes each night and keeping a reading log (record) is very important. Choosing different types of literature including realistic fiction, fantasy, biographies, historical fiction, and nonfiction help children become well rounded in their reading. Children should also be exposed to more newspapers and magazines to help them discover other forms of written communication. This outside reading could be assessed in the following ways:

- keeping student reading records
- having students retell key points
- using both fiction and nonfiction.

There are three assessment strategies that are very important to comprehension and should direct your teaching of reading. These are keeping student reading records, having students retell key points, and using both fiction and nonfiction (Taberski,1977).

Wilson and Gambrell (1988) and Wilde (1997) also state that reading aloud daily and working through and discussing novels are wonderful motivators to independent reading. If children can preview books by looking at pictures, talking to other students about the stories, and reading for pleasure, their interest in literature will improve and result in a lasting love of reading. This is documented by Calkins (1997) and Yenika-Agbaw (1997). Author studies, (learning about an author's life and writings) is another way to build interest. Very often, when a child enjoys a story, he will become interested in that author's style or characters. Children will read books just because they have read all the others written by the same author.

Second, according to Taberski (1997), teachers and parents need to provide age appropriate materials. If the reading material is too easy, children become bored and lose interest. On the other hand, stories too difficult to read cause children to spend too much time decoding so comprehension is lost. Many of the books that are targeted for a specific age group are not appropriate. Because of inappropriate books and stories, Calkins (1997) suggests working in pairs or groups to create strategies for brainstorming, rereading and rethinking. When students work cooperatively, fluency improves, therefore, difficult reading material becomes more easily understood, which helps comprehension.

According to Carbo (1995), using a child's background knowledge helps him comprehend and respond to stories. Using a KWL chart is an excellent strategy to assist in this process. A KWL chart is a graphic organizer that is used to bridge prior knowledge and experience to a new idea or lesson. The K stands for what the students already know about a topic, and this information is listed in the K column. The W stands for what the students want to know about a topic, and this information is listed in the W column. The L stands for what the student learned in the lesson, and this information is listed in the L column. Building on prior knowledge is necessary for reading comprehension. Students can grasp meaning only if they can relate to it in some way. This helps to establish the purpose for reading (pleasure, knowledge, etc.) Making connections between what is known to what is being read is very beneficial. This brings insight to their reading and creates better images. Drawing on knowledge and experience helps a reader to relate what is being read with what he/she already knows. Research by Hammond (1983), Robb (1996), Calkins (1997), and Coman (1998) indicates that understandable vocabulary, sensible stories, and prior knowledge are a must for getting students to read more often and fluently so comprehension improves.

Third, teachers need to teach phoneme awareness that will help children read more naturally. If students can decipher vocabulary and connect meanings with words automatically, they will better comprehend reading material. According to Cunningham (1997), phoneme awareness is being able to take apart words, restructure them and put them together again. Robb (1996, 1997) also backs up the importance of reducing the difficulty of decoding so attention is free for processing the information. Some students try to figure out each word through the process of decoding. They view reading as the act of blending sounds and words together. These are the students who have great difficulty comprehending what they read because so much effort is placed on figuring out the unfamiliar word or words. They lose the meaning of the context.

Too often teachers expect students to learn reading through only one strategy, either phonics (decoding words in isolation) or context clues. Children need to use both strategies and depending on their strengths, may lean towards one more than the other. Flesch (1981) states, that most English words can be read through phonics, and strategies for “whole-word” or “sight reading” can pick up the remainder. The student should employ a variety of strategies to build meaning of the written word.

McIntyre (1996), states that teachers may guide the students' learning of various reading skills or strategies through modeling and coaching. Skills and strategies that are taught and practiced in the classroom enable the students to become better readers. Students tend to learn more when teachers explain what is being learned, why it is being learned, how the skill or strategy will be used, and when to use it effectively (pp. 11-12). A balanced approach to reading instruction helps to meet the needs of most students through exposure and use of various strategies and skills.

Finally, teachers need to help students develop better attention skills for reading. Children can read aloud to each other, in groups of 2 or 3, which gives them an opportunity to read more often. This is an excellent way to help children focus on the reading material, since they are not waiting for the whole class to take turns reading. Barrentine (1996) suggests that read alouds, discussions, and personal experiences make comprehension easier and will help students concentrate better when reading independently. The student develops confidence and feels good about how much he/she already knows about the reading material. Students can then read silently for enjoyment which in itself will hold their attention. If a designated time each day is set aside for silent sustained reading (SSR), many students will look forward to this. It will help children develop their special areas of interest. Since there are no questions or activities to complete, the students full focus can be on enjoyment (Wilson and Gambrell, 1988). Books that are selected by the students for SSR are usually chosen because the subject matter is of interest to the students, or they have had some prior experience with the subject matter and are interested to learn more about the subject.

When teachers identify students' strengths, they can be used to increase attention to reading. Students should be encouraged to try different strategies to see what works best for them. Using different senses or interests such as visual, musical, kinesthetic, mathematical, auditory, and naturalist strategies can be incorporated to increase reading attention. Drawing, tape recording, and using other imaginative tools can keep students attentive. If students can focus on good reading experiences, many will see it as a great thing to do independently or with friends. Robb (1997), Calkins (1997), and Carbo (1997) all promote these concepts in their research. Students should also generate questions for each other. This is a real attention getter. Wilson and Gambrell (1988) state that this method gets the students involved in understanding, thinking, and responding.

Teachers who set goals and have expectations for their students to achieve these goals will use all of the strategies mentioned and see some successes (Taberski, 1997). There is no one right avenue to good teaching of reading, but many different avenues that meet in one place. Students need to develop the ability to use reading strategies appropriately in a given context. With time and practice, the student will become more efficient using strategies that are appropriate for the context he/she is reading. Therefore, children should read aloud, discuss, relate, retell, ask and answer child and teacher generated questions, use phonics strategies, and read, read, read at home to develop and promote better reading comprehension. Our goal as educators is to aid all students to view themselves as effective readers who can become independent readers.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of the strategies used by the five teachers during the period of time from the start of September, 1998 until February, 1999, the first, second, third, and fourth grade classes will show increases in reading comprehension. This will be measured by teacher and standardized tests, surveys, checklists, and anecdotal records. To accomplish this goal, the following strategies will be implemented:

1. Teachers will read stories orally to students for about ten minutes each day.
2. Students will retell or answer questions about the story the following day.

3. Teachers will teach phonemic awareness in an ongoing process.
4. Students will record and return home reading records.
5. Children will generate questions for the other students about stories read.

In order to accomplish project objectives, the following components are necessary:

1. Compare pre and post tests to assess progress.
2. Generate awareness of students' strengths and focus on their strengths.
3. Use an ongoing observation checklist to assess progress.
4. Keep a folder for each student.
5. Create a parent letter describing the action research strategy implementation.

Project Action Plan

The action plan is presented in outline form. This allows all teachers involved to meet the students' needs. The schedule covers the time frame from the start of the 1998 school year until February 1999.

Week 1

1. Send home parent letter.
2. Students will complete a survey in school.
3. Students will complete a pretest in school.

Week 2 – Week 15

1. Teachers will design lessons to implement strategies in the classroom

including:

- teacher reading stories orally to the students
- retelling the story by students
- teaching phonemic awareness
- home reading records
- child-generated questions regarding stories.

2. Teachers will journal weekly in the Field Based Masters Program journal entry log.
3. Teachers will assess students weekly on comprehension skills and file results.
4. Teachers will keep an ongoing student checklist for observing reading progress.
5. Teachers will keep anecdotal records.

Week 16

1. Send home post parent survey.
2. Complete post student survey in class.
3. Complete post test in class.

Methods of Assessment

Teachers need to assess the effects of the interventions. This will be done in various ways. Teachers will use teacher made and standardized test for pre and post test, observation checklists, file folders of assessments, and anecdotal records.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The teacher researchers used the following strategies to improve reading comprehension during the period from September 1998 until February 1999. Five classrooms and two sites were involved in this data collection. All the teachers used a publisher's test (Harcourt Brace, 1995), surveys, anecdotal records (see Appendix G), checklists to record reading comprehension (see Appendix H), and journals were kept.

To accomplish this goal, the following strategies were implemented:

- Teachers read stories orally to students for about ten minutes each day
- Students read or answered questions about the story the following day
- Teachers taught phonemic awareness in an ongoing process
- Students recorded and submitted home reading records (see Appendix I)
- Children generated questions for other students about stories read.

During the first week of the action research plan, the teacher researchers sent home with their students, permission forms (see Appendix J) and parent surveys. The students completed an informational survey in school regarding their reading habits. Pretests were administered to all students. The pretests consisted of: 1) teacher-made test, 2) auditory comprehension test, and 3) a publisher's test.

Throughout the next fourteen weeks, teachers designed lessons to implement strategies in the classroom. All teachers read orally to their students each day. This reading activity also incorporated class discussions, summarizations of the literature, and student generated questions.

Through the use of daily phonics instruction, the teachers reinforced the students' phonemic awareness. Phonics games, worksheets, and word games were consistently used in the classroom. These helped to strengthen the students' word recognition, sight word vocabulary, and word attack skills.

All students kept a reading log of their nightly reading. They were required to read at least fifteen minutes per night for pleasure. This reading was part of their regular homework. The students could read silently, to someone else, or have a story read to them. The students then recorded their reading in their reading logs by listing the date, title, and pages read each night. The parents would then initial these readings. The students would share books they found interesting and felt their peers would enjoy.

Each week, the students were allowed to take out books from the school library. The teachers made an effort to match appropriate books to the children's reading level and interest. There were two promotions taking place in the school during this time. The students were able to earn a free ticket to Six Flags Great America by reading 600 minutes during a specific time period. Pizza Hut helped to promote at-home reading by offering free individual pizzas for those students reading at least 3 books per month. The school also began an Accelerated Reader Program through the school library and the school's reading specialist. The students accumulated points after reading certain books and passing comprehension tests taken on the computer about these books. The students' names would be entered into two different raffles, one for a bicycle and the other for mall certificates. The students would also receive small prizes after earning a specified number of points.

A "Read with Me" program was implemented in the district for grades first through third in September 1998. The program allowed the students to take out a book and tape for several days. The books also had questions that accompanied the packet. The students were expected to bring home the books and tapes, listen to, read along, and discuss the questions with an adult. The students were encouraged to record the books and tapes on their reading logs.

The first grade students at Site A, Classroom 1, participated in a "Reading Buddies" program. Students from a third grade classroom and the first grade students would come together to one classroom and both first and third graders would listen to the teacher read a story. Then, a project was completed with each third and first grader working together. The students either drew a picture or wrote something to go along with the story that they had just heard. The third grade students would assist their first grade buddies with the drawing and/or spelling.

In addition, the teacher made "Word Books" for each student that included words used often in writing. The words were listed alphabetically along with blank lines for students to add their own words. The students would add words they used or needed for writing stories. Also, the teacher made a word wall in the classroom that listed vocabulary words as well as all the students' names. Students began taking spelling tests on word families that were introduced by the teacher, and then time was given for the students to study and learn them.

In addition, the students were responsible for keeping track of how many minutes they were reading at home. In November, a book report form was attached to each reading log. The students were asked to pick one book a week and write a summary report of what they read and then draw a picture. The book reports started out with just the book title, author, and a place for the students to draw a picture from the story. Each week the book report form became more difficult. The book report included having the students draw a picture from the beginning, middle, and end of their story. Another book report form asked the students to write a sentence about the story. Still other forms asked the students to write two sentences about their book and tell whether it was a fiction or nonfiction. Finally, one of the last book report forms asked the children to describe the setting of their story.

The students at Site A, Classroom 2, grade 3, also participated in a "Reading Buddies" program. A classroom of first graders joined the class every Monday afternoon. One of the teachers would read a story to the students. The book selection varied each week. Most of the time, the teachers read short fiction literature, but they also read tall tales, seasonal books, and fairy tales.

The teacher always allowed students to share ideas during the stories. Each third grade student would be placed with a first grade student. These pairs of children would then discuss their favorite parts of the story and create pictures from the book. This was a great time for interaction between the two grade levels.

All students kept reading logs for their at home reading. The teacher explained to the parents at Parent Visitation Night, the procedure for entries in this log. The students also brought home a letter the first week of school explaining the logs. The teacher checked the logs every other Friday and wrote comments on the entries. There was not always parent cooperation with this assignment. One of the students would usually turn in his log the following Monday or Tuesday. During a four-week period, he entered the same books and the same number of pages read on two different occasions. His mother always signed these entries. The teacher spoke by phone with his mother and stressed the importance of reading. The boy's reading log has since improved.

The teacher also used portable word walls as a strategy to assist the students with phonics skills. A portable word wall is a systematically organized collection of words. It is used for the study of words. The decision to use a portable word wall, verses the traditional large word wall classroom display, was implemented after a discussion with the reading specialist. Four students from this classroom work with the specialist twice a week. The teachers wanted something the students could take with them to their individualized pullout reading assistance where further word study issues would be addressed. The portable word wall was created using a manila file folder and two sheets with the letters of the alphabet organized across the top of each sheet. Throughout the year, students added words to their word walls both from in class lessons and experiences with the reading specialist.

Finally, the students produced many types of book reports. After the students read four library books, they chose one book to present to the class. The students selected from the following: oral, written, drawn, or dressed in character. The students especially enjoyed dressing up as a biographical character.

The teacher researcher, at Site A, Classroom 3, grade 4, chose to use: lack of reading for pleasure and age-appropriate reading materials, along with poor decoding and attention skills, as the starting place to implement the strategies to improve reading comprehension.

To begin, the students had to be encouraged to realize that reading could be fun! To accomplish this, the teacher decided to read to the class at the start of each day for about ten minutes, as a warm-up for the reading class. The books chosen over the fourteen week period were from all types of literature: fantasy, realistic fiction, biography, and non-fiction. They needed to be books that would keep the students' interest, raise their curiosity, yet be at a level they could understand. Also, pictures shown to the students from the book helped keep their minds on the story.

The normal routine was to have a child retell or summarize what had occurred in the chapter the previous day. This would stimulate interest. Then, the next chapter was read to the students with dramatic emphasis, and sometimes they were asked to predict what might happen next, or even to finish a sentence (if it was obvious). This really kept the students attentive and helped them, later, with questions. This was an active rather than passive reading session.

At the end of the week, the students had a discussion session which incorporated levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. They started with very literal questions, such as describing, naming, and recalling. The sessions evolved into interpretive questions, in the next level, which was to process information as in analyzing, comparing/contrasting, and explaining. The highest level was to apply the thinking skills by evaluating, predicting, and imagining. They enjoyed asking and answering questions of their peers, rather than teacher directed questioning. The students discussed something they particularly enjoyed or questioned something they did not fully understand. This was done in cooperative groups or as a whole class.

These strategies were used in reading class novels throughout the year, too. Each month, the students read a novel. All of the strategies of the research project were incorporated. The students read in co-operative groups and became "experts" on the characters, setting, problem, and solution of that novel. When completed, the students developed a summary and questions to share with the other groups. Specialized book reports were used for some of these novels, such as "Book in a Bag" and mobiles.

Because many students have poor decoding and attention skills, the teacher chose to use multiple intelligences, for example; musical, kinesthetic, and visual, in teaching phonics skills. Many children have difficulty remembering the sounds of certain letters, so using the five senses in class helped students to remember certain sounds. For example, candy (long e sound) or fry (long i sound) was remembered by giving them a piece of candy or a french fry. If a particular object were unavailable, they could close their eyes and imagine the taste, smell, or sound of it. In using special talents or interests: music, poems, or art, the students could draw, rhyme, or sing sounds to help them remember. There are other strategies the teacher used to help the children associate sounds such as, mnemonics and games. Once students understood it concretely, they could take the concept to a more abstract level. When reading more difficult stories, they will be able to try different sounds, more naturally, until the word sounds right or makes sense.

As the intervention period progressed, the teacher could see and document that the children chose more age appropriate books and various authors. Also, the students read more in their spare time and shared book information with each other in the library. The goal of teaching children to read for pleasure, having phoneme awareness, and being more attentive had been reached. A child who wants to read will improve in comprehension because of the constant practice he/she gets when reading an interesting book.

The teacher researcher at Site B, Classroom 1, grade 1, implemented strategies throughout the sixteen week period to encourage daily reading in order to improve reading comprehension skills. During the first week a pretest was given to determine a baseline. Also an interest inventory was given to provide material of high interest to the students.

Reading Partners for first graders were selected the second week of school. A third grader and a first grader formed a partnership for reading. Every morning at 11:15 a.m., the partners would get together and read to each other. Each child was given an opportunity to read and to be read to, so that all the first graders would benefit from this experience. It provided opportunities to strengthen listening skills, fluency skills, and vocabulary development for each of the partners. Word games, journals, and Weekly Reader were incorporated after several weeks to renew and maintain interest.

For the students who were at risk, fourth grade student buddies were established twice a week at 8:30 a.m. before the start of school to reinforce skills. Journals and reading logs were used to document material read. The fourth graders also helped the younger students practice vocabulary flash cards.

Throughout the entire project, phonics games, word games, and worksheets were a daily part of language arts class to strengthen word recognition, sight word vocabulary, and word attack skills. The students worked in pairs, cooperative groups, and teams in order to practice skills for individual mastery.

The second semester, the teacher began a spelling program to encourage the students to recognize letter patterns. Since a formalized program is not established until second grade, word families were used. Puzzles and rhymes formed from the word families were included to stimulate interest.

Graphic organizers and story webs were used on a weekly basis so that students could recognize important parts of the stories and become familiar with story elements. This also helped the children to strengthen sequencing skills in order to retell the story in the proper form and order.

The teacher researcher at Site B, Classroom 2, grade 2, chose to use the following procedures to meet the objectives of the action research plan: oral reading stories to students each day, retelling or answering questions about the story, teaching phonemic awareness, having students record books read at home, and having students generate questions for other students about the stories read.

First, the teacher researcher read daily to the class for at least ten minutes after completing calendar activities. The books chosen over the fourteen week period were seasonal, fantasy, realistic fiction, non-fiction, and biographies. Also, the teacher used trade books pertaining to science, social studies, and math. The trade books that were used correlated with the unit of study in these subject areas. They provided the students with additional information in the specific subject area. The majority of the books read to the children had pictures that accompanied the text.

The teacher introduced new vocabulary, worked on building background prior to reading a story, and set a purpose for reading the story. Pictures were used to tell what was happening in the story before the teacher read the page to the class. At the end of the story, the teacher would have the students retell the story in their own words. The teacher modeled the procedure by retelling several events that occurred in the beginning of the story. If the teacher was reading a chapter book to her class, she would have the students recap events from the chapters that had been read to them the day before. Discussions of story setting, characters, problems, and solutions were also used to strengthen the students' understanding of the story. The teacher often used graphic organizers such as story webs, flow charts, and Venn Diagrams when working on story elements. Also, the teacher and students generated five or six sentences retelling the important events from the story. The teacher would write the sentences on sentence strips, and the students would organize the sentences in proper sequential order. Using Bloom's Taxonomy, the teacher generated questions ranging from literal to interpretive.

The students were asked to generate questions about stories read in class. The teacher modeled this procedure for the class. Literal questions were used at first and then they proceeded to inferential questions. The students would work in pairs to generate one literal and one inferential question. They would then share their questions with the rest of the class. The student answering the question correctly then got to ask a question.

Phonemic awareness was taught four out of the five school days each week. The teacher used a phonics workbook (Modern Curriculum Press, Level B). The teacher reviewed consonant sounds and short vowel sounds. She used cassette tapes to review the short vowel sounds. The students would listen to the tape, practice singing the song that accompanied each vowel sound, and do a follow-up activity for each sound. Through visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile learning experiences, the students worked on improving or strengthening their word attack skills. After reviewing short vowel sounds, the teacher worked on long vowel sounds, and special vowel sounds (such as oi, oy, ou, ow, au, and aw). The teacher again used the same procedure for long vowel sounds that was used for reviewing short vowel sounds. Also, the teacher would have the students work in pairs when working on special vowel sounds by having them categorize the words under the appropriate sound.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The teacher researchers would like to call attention to the fact that the targeted classes experienced a decrease in the population. Due to student mobility, the two first grade classrooms decreased by a total of three students. The targeted class population decreased from 102 students to 99 students. The following graphs of pre/post tests and pre/post surveys combined results of grade levels one, two, three, and four.

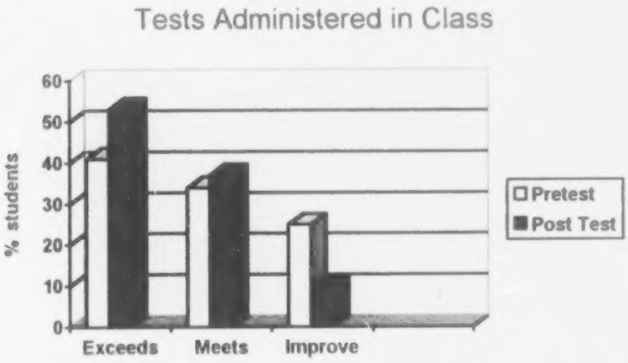


Figure 32. Auditory Comprehension

The pre and post auditory comprehension test was read orally to the students. The questions were also read to the students. The test group consisted of 99 students. The post test indicates a 12% increase in the number of students who exceeded the expectations for the listening test, a 3% increase in the number of students who met the expectations and a 15% decrease in the number of students in the needs improvement group. In analyzing the data, the interventions have had a positive effect on all three groups (see Appendix K).

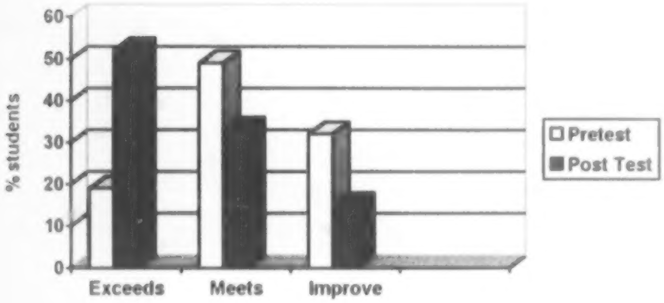


Figure 33. Holistic/Skills/Integrated

Publisher designed pre and post tests by Harcourt Brace were given to students in grades one through four. According to the results, there was a 33% increase in the number of students who exceeded the expectations, a 16% decrease in the number of students who met the expectations and a 15% decrease in the number of students in the "needs improvement" group. In analyzing the data, this testing format showed the most dramatic change. The interventions have had a positive effect on all three groups (see Appendix L).

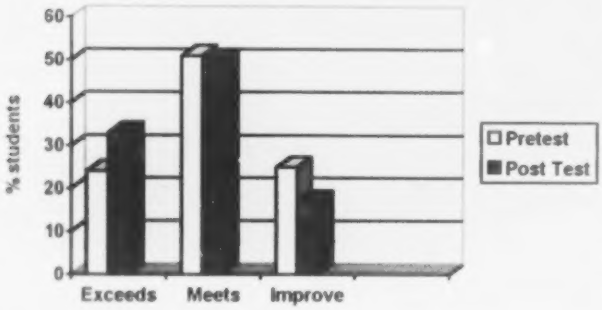
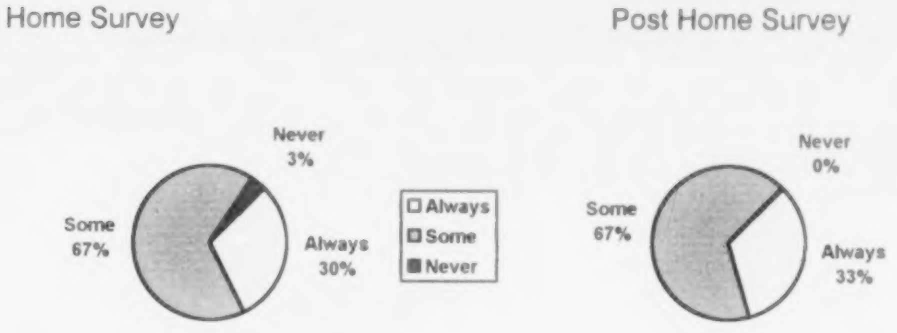


Figure 34. Teacher Made

Pre and post teacher designed tests were given to all students in grades one through four. According to the results, there was a 10% increase in the number of students in the exceeds expectations group. There was no significant change in the meets expectations group. A 9% decrease was noted in the number of students in the needs improvement group. In analyzing the data, the results indicate that the interventions had a positive effect on two of the groups (see Appendix M).

Home Survey

A home survey was sent home with two first grade classes, one second grade class, one third grade class, and one fourth grade class. The home survey was sent home at the beginning of the action research and the post home survey was sent at the end of the research. Students were asked to participate in a research project to determine the significance of reading in the home environment. There were 99 responses out of 102 to the survey at the beginning of the action research. There were 99 responses out of 99 to the survey at the end of the action research. The parents/guardians were asked to respond to each of the ten questions as accurately as possible (see Appendix N).


Home Survey

Post Home Survey

Figure 35. Your child reads at home for pleasure

For the first question of the survey, Does your child read at home for pleasure? one-third of the parents responded that their children always read for pleasure in the post home survey. This post home survey showed an increase of 3% compared to the initial home survey. More than two-thirds of the parents responded that their children sometimes read for pleasure in both the past and initial home survey. Zero percent of the students never read for pleasure in the post home survey. The initial home survey recorded 3% of the students never reading for pleasure. Based on the home survey all of the 99 students enjoyed reading for pleasure, but only one-third of them always enjoyed reading for pleasure. Two-thirds of the students enjoyed reading for pleasure some of the times. There was only a slight improvement in the number of students who enjoyed reading for pleasure when comparing the post home survey to the initial home survey.

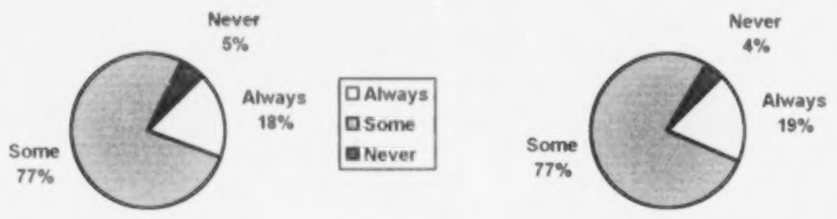


Figure 36. Your child reads to you

For the second question of the survey, Does your child read to you? almost one-fifth of the parents responded that their children always read to them in the post home survey. Three-fourths of the parents responded that their children sometimes read to them in both the post and initial home survey. One-twentieth of the parents said their children never read to them in the post home survey. The post home survey showed a slight increase in the number of students reading to the parent/guardian. This question shows the researchers that the majority of the children do not frequently read to their parents.

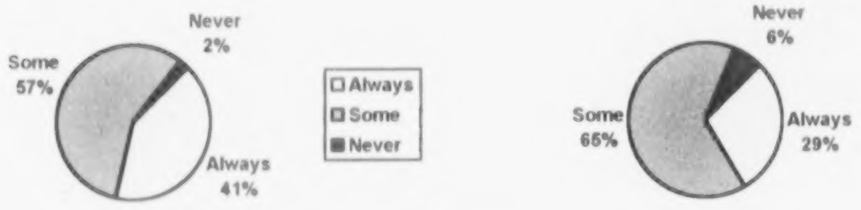


Figure 37. You read to your child

For the third question of the survey, Do you read to your child? almost one-third of the parents always read to their children in the post home survey. The initial home survey indicated that two-fifths of the parents read to their children. About two-thirds of the parents sometimes read to their students in the post home survey while slightly over one-half of the parents sometimes read to their children in the initial home survey. Six percent of the parents indicated that they never read to their children and only 2% of the parents never read to their children in the initial home survey. The number of parents who never read to their children slightly increased from the initial home survey to the post home survey. Also, the number of parents who always read to their children decreased from the initial home survey to the post home survey. This may suggest that as the children became more fluent and proficient readers, the parents spent less time reading to their children.

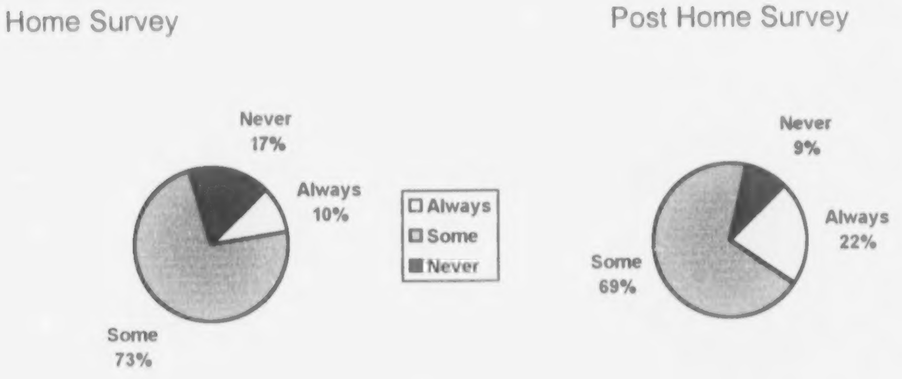


Figure 38. Your child prefers to read by himself/herself

For the forth question of the survey, Does your child prefer reading by himself/herself? one-fifth of the parents indicated that their children always prefer to read to themselves in the post home survey, while one-tenth of the parents indicated that their children always prefer to read to themselves in the initial home survey. About two-thirds of the parents indicated that their children sometimes read to themselves in the post home survey, while almost three-fourths of the parents indicated that their children sometimes read to themselves in the initial home survey. One-tenth of the parents indicated that their children never read to themselves in the post home survey while almost one-fifth of the parents indicated that their children never read to themselves in the initial home survey. The results from the post home survey suggest that over the duration of the action research, the children preferred to always or sometimes read to themselves. As the children became more skilled in reading, they seemed more capable of reading independently.

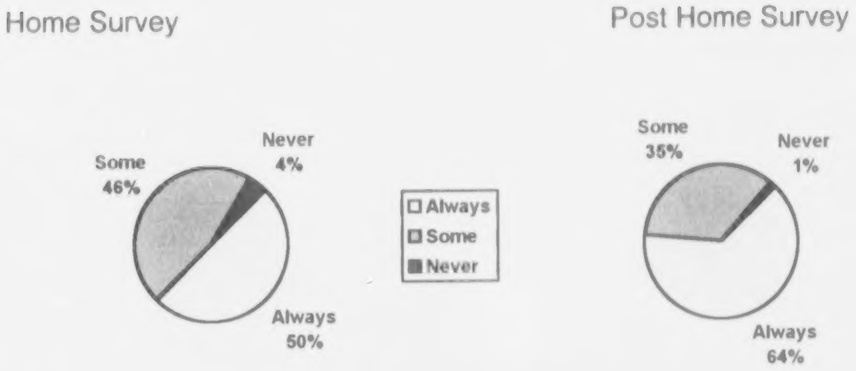


Figure 39. Your child tries to sound out words that he/she does not know

For the fifth question of the survey, Does your child try to sound out words that he/she doesn't know? about two-thirds of the parents believed their children always try to sound out words they do not know in the post home survey while one-half of the parents believed their children always try to sound out words in the initial home survey. Slightly over one-third of the parents believed that their children sometimes try to sound out words that they do not know in the post home survey while less than one-half of the parents believed that their children sometimes try to sound out words in the initial home survey. Only one hundredth of the parents believed their children never did try to sound out words that he/she did not know in the post home survey compared to the 4% of the parents who believed their children never did try to sound out words in the initial home survey. This suggests that the students receiving more guided practice decoding during oral reading sessions became more skillful with decoding new or unfamiliar words.

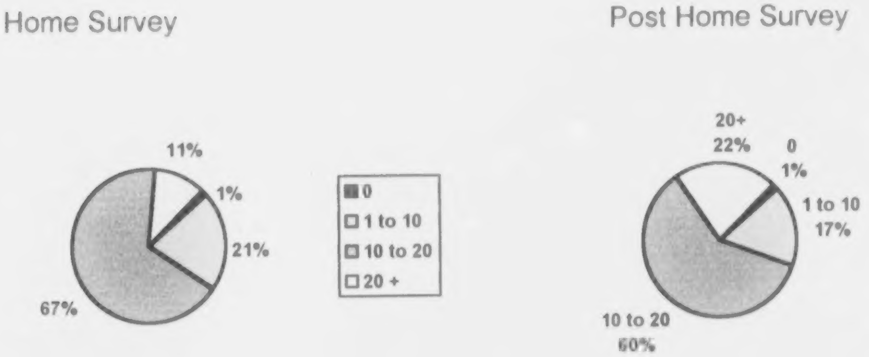


Figure 40. Your child sets aside some time to read for enjoyment each night

For the sixth question of the survey, Approximately how much time does your child read for enjoyment each night? one-fifth of the children read for 20 or more minutes each night in the post home survey while one-tenth of the children read for 20 or more minutes in the initial home survey. Three-fifths read from 10 to 20 minutes each night in the post home survey while two-thirds of the children read from 10 to 20 minutes in the initial home survey. Less than one-fifth of the children read from 1 to 10 minutes in the post home survey while one-fifth of the students read from 1 to 10 minutes in the initial home survey. One percent of the children did not read at all at home in both the initial and post home surveys. Overall, the majority of the children spent more time reading for enjoyment each night.

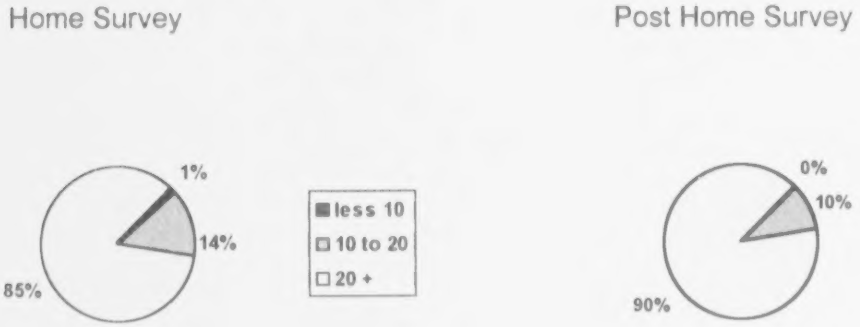
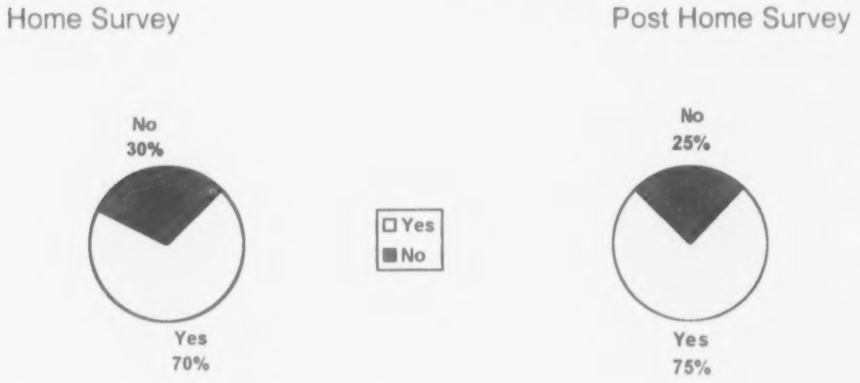


Figure 41. Your child had children's books at home

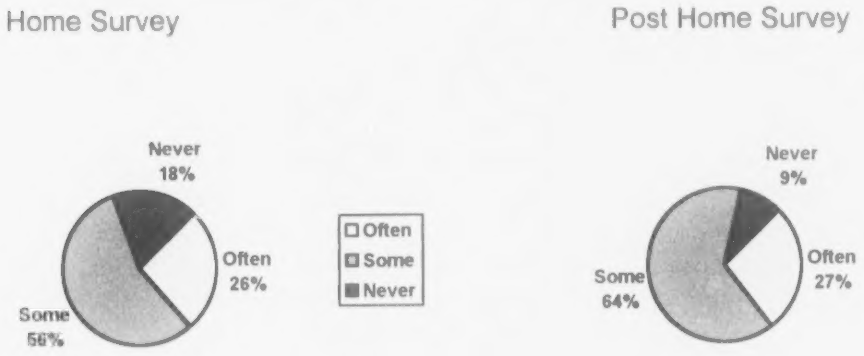
For the seventh question, How many children's books do you have at home? nine-tenths of the parents have more than 20 books in the post home survey while four-fifths have more than 20 books in the initial home survey. One-tenth of the parents have 10-20 books in the post home survey while more than one-tenth have 10-20 in the initial home survey. In the post home survey no children had less than 10 books. The initial home survey indicated one percent had less than 10 books. There was not much increase between the pre/post surveys but the researchers are pleased that there are so many books in the students' homes and hope that reading the books will strengthen their comprehension skills.


Home Survey

Post Home Survey

Figure 42. Your child has a library card

For the eighth question, Does you child have a library card? seventh-five percent said yes in the post home survey while seventy percent said yes in the initial home survey. Twenty-five percent said no in the post home survey compared to thiry percent said no in the initial survey.


Home Survey

Post Home Survey

Figure 43. Your child visits the library

For the ninth question, How often does your child visit the library? one-fourth said their children often go in the initial and post home survey. Almost two-thirds said their children sometimes go to the library in the post home survey while more than one-half state their children sometimes go in the initial home survey. In the post home survey, only one-tenth of the parents said their children never go to the library compared to almost one-fifth said their children never went to the library in the initial home survey. There is no significant difference between the pre/post surveys but the researches are pleased that so many children visit the library and would like to see all of them do so.

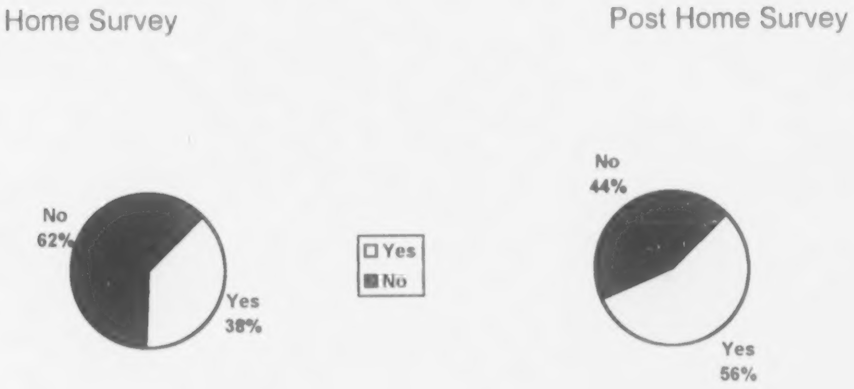
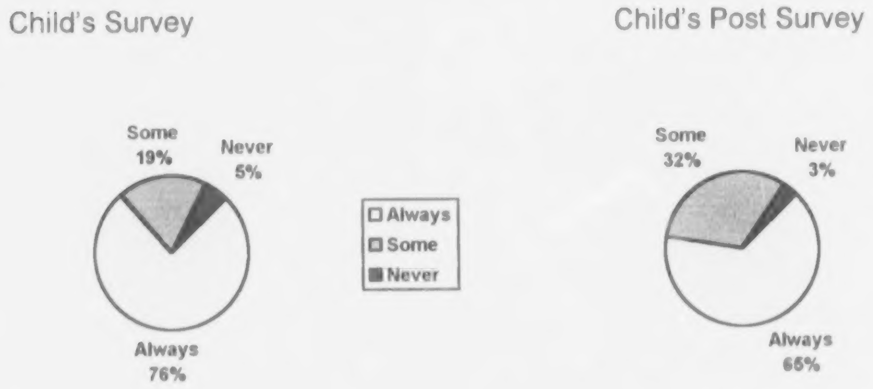


Figure 44. Your child has a favorite author

For the tenth question, Does your child have a favorite author? over one-half of the parents said yes in the post home survey while a little more than one-third said yes in the initial home survey. In the post home survey more than two-fifths said no while three-fifths said no in the initial home survey. There is an increase between the pre/post survey. The researchers are pleased that children chosen authors they enjoy reading.

Child's Survey

A child's reading survey was give to two first grade classes, one second grade class, one third grade, and one fourth grade. The child's survey was administered at the beginning of the action research and then again at the end. The questions were read to the students, and they were asked to answer honestly. The first and second grade surveys had picture answers from which to choose, but the third and fourth surveys had word choices. All of the answers were circled by the students. There were 102 responses in the initial survey and 99 in the post survey (see Appendix O).



Child's Survey

Child's Post Survey

Figure 45. You enjoy listening to a story

The first question, Do you enjoy listening to a story? had two-thirds of the students indicate that they always enjoyed listening to a story in the post survey more than three-fourths always enjoyed listening in the initial survey. About a third of the students sometimes enjoyed listening in the post survey while one-fifth sometimes enjoyed listening in the initial survey. In the post survey three percent of the students did not enjoy listening to the story while one-fourth did not enjoy listening to a story in the initial survey.

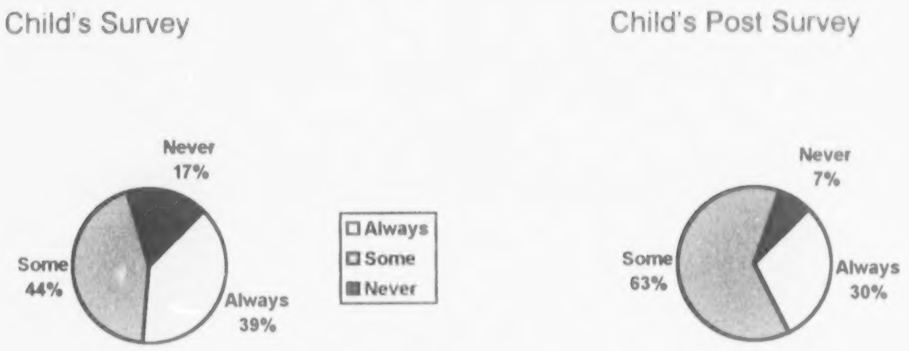


Figure 46. You read every night

The second question, Do you read every night? a little less than one-third of the students always read in the post survey. Two-fifths always read in the initial survey. Almost two-thirds read sometimes in the post survey. In the initial survey almost one-half sometimes read at night. Seven percent of the students never read in the post survey while one-fifth never read in the initial survey. There was an overall improvement in the number of students who read each night.

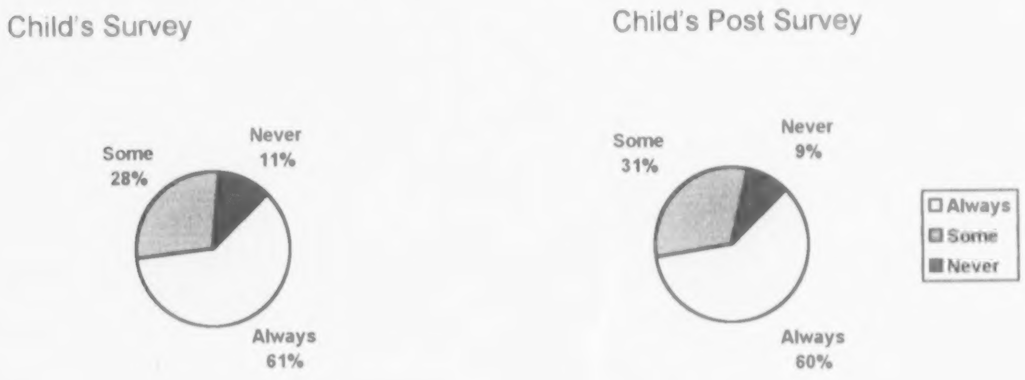


Figure 47. You like reading

For the third question, Do you like reading? three-fifths of the students in both the initial and post surveys always enjoyed reading. Slightly more than one-fourth liked to read sometimes in the post survey, while one-third liked to read sometimes in the initial survey. About one-tenth never liked to read in both initial and post home survey. There was not much change in attitudes and feelings regarding reading from the initial survey to the post survey.

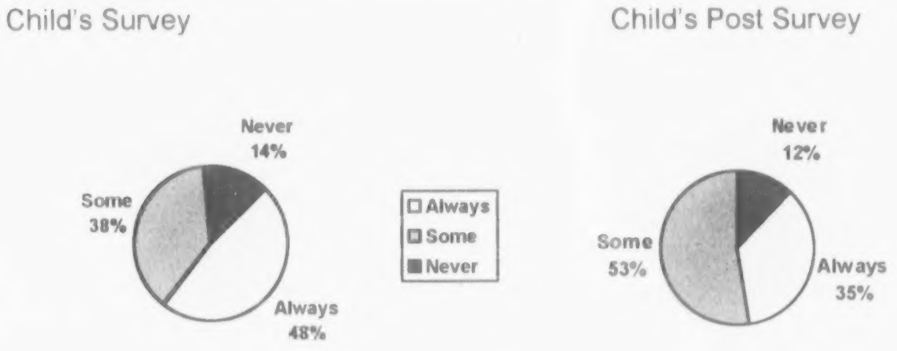


Figure 48. You have someone at home read to you

The fourth question, Does anyone read to you? had slightly over one-third state that someone always read to them in the post survey while almost one-half stated that someone always read to them in the initial survey. Slightly over one-half indicated that they were read to sometimes in the post survey compared to two-fifths that were read to sometimes in the initial survey. About one-tenth indicated that they were never read to in the post survey while slightly more than one-tenth indicated that they were never read to in the initial survey. Because more students were developing better reading skills, the post survey indicated more students preferred to read by themselves.

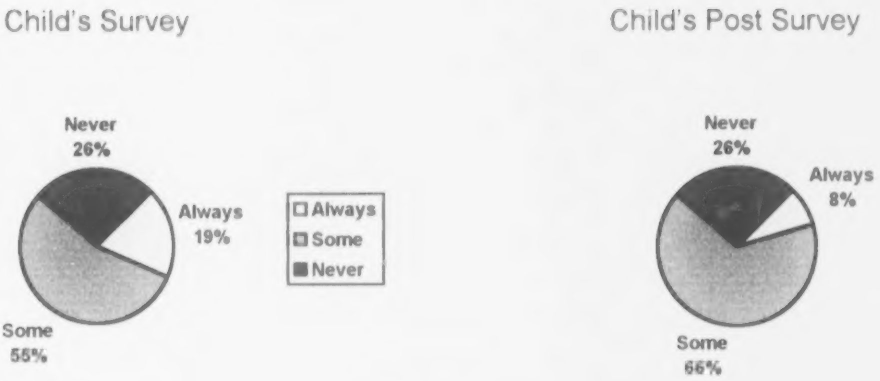


Figure 49. You find a lot of books too hard for you to read

The fifth question, Are a lot of books hard to read? had less than one-tenth state that many books were too hard in the post survey. The initial survey indicated that one-fifth found many books too hard for them. About two-thirds indicated that some books were too hard in the post survey. One-half indicated some books were too hard in the initial survey. Approximately one-fourth in the initial and post home surveys indicated that many books were not too hard. Teachers and parents still need to assist students in choosing appropriate books.

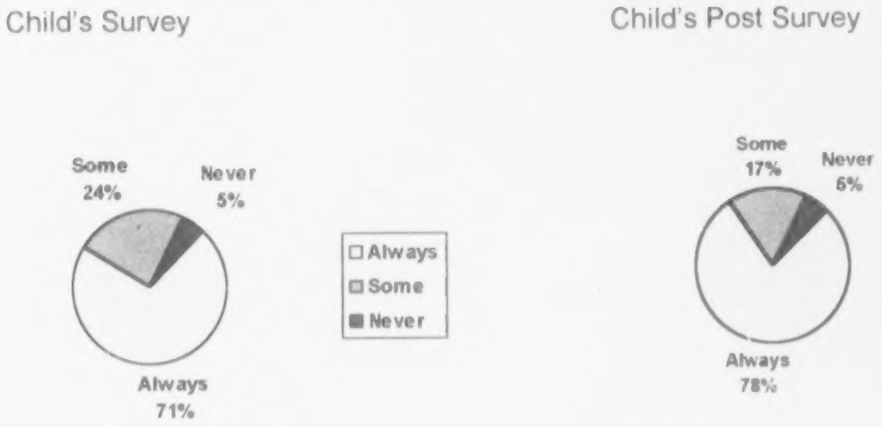


Figure 50. You try to sound out words that you do not know

For the sixth question, Do you try to sound out words that you do not know? slightly over three-fourths indicated they always tried to sound out words they do not know in the post survey. Less than three-fourths indicated they always tried to sound out words in the initial survey. More than one-tenth said they sometimes tried to sound out words in the post survey while almost one-fourth said they sometimes tried in the initial survey. Slightly less than one-fourth stated that they never tried to sound out words in the initial and post home survey. Because the students have developed phonics skills, they tried to sound out words that they didn't know rather than asking teachers or parents for the pronunciation.

The teacher/researchers focused on a daily schedule that incorporated a home responsibility component to improve reading attitudes and skills in order to strengthen reading comprehension. The consistent use of the interventions chosen to increase comprehension in the four grade levels, appeared to have had positive results based on the total increase in student scores among all classrooms involved.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the information presented in Presentation and Analysis of Results, the following conclusions result from the data. First, there was a marked improvement in reading for pleasure. Students who previously had to be encouraged to check out books from the classroom library were now selecting books that they would not have checked out. Due to the increased interest in reading, the students were able to understand stories more comprehensively and had less difficulty understanding questions asked about the stories. Overall, each test: auditory, publisher's, and teacher made, showed significant improvement in reading comprehension.

In evaluating the auditory comprehension tests, the post tests showed 10% higher in the exceeds category. There was no major change in the meets category, and the needs improvement category was lowered by 12%. Some students from Site A, Classroom 2, did not do as well on the post auditory test, (see Appendix K), possibly due to the time of year. Many achievement tests had recently been given, as well as more complicated information on the post test, and more detailed answers were expected. This did not affect the overall result of the graph because another group offset this change. This second group from Site B, Classroom 2, performed higher than expected on the auditory test which showed that listening and comprehension skills improved due to constant retelling of stories.

The publisher's test showed a dramatic increase in the exceeds category, with the post test scores improving over thirty percent. The "meets expectations" group improved about fifteen percent, while the needs improvement category dropped by half to fifteen percent. Students at Site A, Classroom 3, were of average ability, but over-achievers, therefore they had test scores that were higher than expected.

The teacher made tests showed some improvement in the exceeds category (about 10%). There was virtually no change (which is fine), and a slight decrease (about 8%), in the "needs improvement" group. These data showed improvements that were less significant possibly due to subjectivity of questions and answers, higher expectations of the students by the teachers, and more challenging stories as the year progressed.

Classroom 1, Site A, had more students than normal for first grade in this district. Initially, the teacher had concerns about meeting the needs for such a large group. However, using the strategies from the action plan, the students performed better than expected overall.

The following recommendations would be made to other teacher researchers. The questions in the parent and child surveys seemed confusing and repetitive. There was a discrepancy among many of the questions asked of both groups. Perhaps the surveys should have been narrower in their range of time because never, always, and sometimes appeared too vague. Examples of the change might include often, sometimes, seldom, and never. We also believe many of the parents and children responded in a way they thought the teacher expected rather than honestly.

Some of the tests did not assess the children's abilities accurately. In the first and second grade testing, there was too much emphasis placed on illustrating and writing rather than reading comprehension. The teacher researchers would recommend a skills based test instead of an integrated assessment.

There needed to be a consequence for the students who neglected to return their reading logs weekly. Adjustments had to be made at Site B, Classroom 1, for this neglect. Lack of initial response to the reading logs caused the teacher to modify the procedure by sending home weekly progress reports. This action proved to be very effective because it caused an immediate response from the parents.

Another recommendation would be for the teacher to be very disciplined and consistent about using the new routines. We felt that this was something that really helped the students improve because they looked forward to the activities planned for them.

We, as a group, have decided to continue to use all of the interventions for future classes because the strategies have produced positive results. Instilling the enjoyment and love for reading is the strongest recommendation we would make.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A

Bob had a dog.

The dog's name was Spot.

Spot had a big brown spot on his back.

Bob and Spot played together.

Bob threw a stick.

Spot ran after it.

They had fun together.

Name________________________________

Listen to the story then answer the questions by circling the right answer.

1. What was the boy's name?

Bob   Sam   Dan

2. What did he have?

a cat   a dog   a fish

3. What was the dog's name?

Spot   King   Gus

4. Why was the dog called Spot?

he was white   he was black   he had a spot

5. What did Bob and Spot do together?

played walked jumped

6. When they played, what did Bob do?

threw a bone threw a stick threw a ball

7. Then what did the dog do?

He rolled over he sat down he ran after a stick

2B GRADE 2.3

TIME ______________

ERRORS (10) ________

COMP (4) ____________

COMMENTS:

Bob was eating his dinner.

"Ding-dong," went the fire bell.

The firemen were going to a fire. The engine went quickly down the street.

Bob jumped up and left his dinner.

He ran into the street.

The fire was on the next corner.

Bob watched the men put the fire out.

"Ding-dong," went the bell again.

The engine started back down the street.

Bob watched the engine go.

Then he went back home and ate his dinner.

1. What was the boy doing at home? (*eating dinner*)
2. What did he hear? (*fire bell* or *ding-dong*)
3. What was happening? (*fire* or *fire engine* or *firemen going down the street*)
4. What did Bob do then? (*ran into street* or *ran to the fire*)
5. What did the firemen do? (*put out the fire*)
6. What did Bob do after the fire? (*went home* or *ate dinner* or *watched the fire engine*)
7. How do you suppose Bob's mother felt about his leaving his dinner? (*angry* or *annoyed* or *mad*)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Name ______________________________

Listen to the story your teacher will read to you and answer the following questions.

1. What was Bob doing at home?

2. What did he hear?

3. What was happening?

4. What did Bob do then?

5. What did the firemen do?

6. What did Bob do after the fire?

7. How do you suppose Bob's mother felt about his leaving his dinner?

3A GRADE 3.3

TIME ______________

ERRORS (12) __________

COMP (5) ____________

COMMENTS:

Bob has a brown and white dog named Spotty. He is called Spotty because he has brown spots on his nose. Bob always takes his dog on his trips to the woods. The dog helps scare the rabbits. Bob walks slowly, but his dog scampers through the leaves.

One day Spotty left Bob and went off by himself. Bob called and whistled, but the dog did not come back to him. After a while Bob heard the dog barking a long way off. Bob walked toward the sound of the barking until he found the dog. Spotty thought he had caught a black and white kitten. But it wasn't a kitten, it was a skunk. That night the dog had to sleep outside.

1. What was the dog called? (*Spotty*)
2. Why did he have that name? (*spots on nose*)
3. Why did Bob take the dog to the woods? (*to find* or *scare rabbits*)
4. What happened one day? (*the dog ran off* or *got lost*)
5. How did Bob find his dog? (*heard him barking* or *called* or *whistled*)
6. What did the dog think he had caught? (*kitten* or *cat*)
7. What did the dog really catch? (*skunk*)
8. Why did the dog have to sleep outside? (*smelled* or *was punished*)

Name______________________

1. What was the dog called?

2. Why did he have that name?

3. Why did Bob take the dog to the woods?

4. What happened one day?

5. How did Bob find his dog?

6. What did the dog think he had caught?

7. What did the dog really catch?

8. Why did the dog have to sleep outside?

4A GRADE 4.5

TIME ____________

ERRORS (10) ________

COMP (5) ____________

COMMENTS:

auditory
comprehension
pretest

Yesterday Bob took a trip to a city market that was somewhat like a store but a great deal bigger. It didn't have any bread or canned goods like the grocery stores. But there were a great many big boxes of vegetables and fruits.

Bob was hungry and wanted just one plum or cherry to taste. He wondered if one of the men would sell him just one plum. Everyone was buying the fruit and vegetables by the whole crate. When Bob asked the man to sell him one plum, he laughed and gave Bob an extra large plum wrapped in paper but wouldn't take any money.

As he walked along eating the plum, Bob watched the men unloading the trucks and big trailers. They would chop open the top of the crate so that anyone could see the fruit. If a buyer liked the fruit, and was willing to pay the price, he might buy the entire truckload.

1. What is a city market like? (*store, but bigger* or *big store* or *bigger than store*)
2. What does the grocery store have that the city market doesn't have? (*bread* or *canned goods*)
3. What did he ask the man for? (*plum*)
4. What did the man do? (*gave plum to him* or *laughed*)
5. How much did Bob pay for the plum? (*nothing*)
6. What were the men doing to the trucks and trailers? (*unloading*)
7. Why did they open the crates? (*so anyone could see the fruit*)
8. If a man liked the fruit, what might he do? (*ask price* or *buy it*)

Appendix

Auditory Comprehension Pretest

Group - S = site C = class	# of students in "exceeds group"	# of students in "meets group"	# of students in "needs improvement group"	Total # of students
S A, C 1	17	9	4	30
S A, C 2	7	9	3	19
S A, C 3	5	7	5	17
S B, C 1	4	8	9	21
S B, C 2	9	2	4	15
Total in group	42	35	25	102

Appendix B

Publisher Pretest

Group - S = site C = class	# of students in "exceeds group"	# of students in "meets group"	# of students in "needs improvement group"	Total # of students
S A, C 1	6	13	11	30
S A, C 2	0	12	7	19
S A, C 3	4	4	9	17
S B, C 1	4	13	4	21
S B, C 2	5	8	2	15
Total in group	19	50	33	102

Appendix C

Beginning:

Middle:

End:

Name____

Arthur's Pet Business

Vocabulary Key Words

Draw a line from the key word to its meaning.

1. phone
2. special
3. earned
4. care
5. allowed
6. work

different from others

watchful attention

worked hard to get something, got paid for a job

telephone

to do a job

let someone do or have something

Cause and Effect

Read the story. Think about what happens and why these things happen. Then answer the questions.

Arthur was busy because he was taking care of Belinda's bullfrog, Henry's hamster, and Fred's fish at the same time.The fish needed more food, so Arthur asked D.W. to watch the pets while he went to the store.

"If you take too long, you'll owe me two dollars!" said D.W.

Arthur started to get onto his bike, but one of the tires was flat. So he had to walk all the way to the pet store. He quickly found the food on the shelf and went to pay for it. There were many people in line, though, so Arthur had to wait. Finally he paid for the fish food and left.

When Arthur got home, all of the pets were fine.

"That will be two dollars," said D.W.

1. Why is Arthur so busy? ______________________________

____

2. What does Arthur's flat tire cause? ________________

____

3. Why does Arthur owe D.W. two dollars? ____________

____

Story Order

Read the sentences below. Then cut out the sentence strips. Glue the sentence strips in the order the events happened in the story.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Arthur gets to keep one of Perky's puppies.

Arthur starts a pet business.

Arthur wants a puppy.

Arthur takes care of other people's pets.

Name____________________

Comprehension Check - "Johnny Appleseed"

1. Tell two facts about Johnny's early life?____________

____

____

2. How did Johnny feel about animals?______________

____

How do you know?________________________________

____

3. Why do you think Johnny suggested a tree chopping contest with the woodsmen instead of a wrestling match?

____

____

4. Why do you think Johnny lived in the forest instead of building a house and settling down there?

____

____

5. Compare Johnny Appleseed to Miss Rumphius. What did Johnny Appleseed do for the world?

____

Name Teacher - made test

"Philippe and the Blue Parrot"
Comp Check

1. Describe the setting of the story (where and when).

   The story took place (where)

   The story took place (when)

2. Describe what kind of a person Philippe was (2 character traits).

   Philippe was

   and

3. What did Philippe want to do for his mother?

   Philippe wanted to for his mother.

4. Where did Philippe go to make his mother's present?

   Philippe went to to make his mother's present.

5. Why did Philippe sell his mother's present?

   Philippe sold his mother's present because

6. Why did a journalist come to visit Philippe?

   A journalist came to visit Philippe because

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7. What did Philippe's mother mean when she told him to watch for the golden earring and find it so they'd never go hungry again?

   Philippe's mother meant

8. Why did the price of Philippe's pictures keep going up?

   The price of Philippe's pictures kept going up because

9. Did Philippe ever find the golden earring? Explain.

   Philippe did/didn't find the golden earring because

10. Where did Philippe's pictures hang (2 places)?

    Philippe's pictures hung in

    and

Appendix

Teacher Made Pretest

Group - S = site C = class	# of students in "exceeds group"	# of students in "meets group"	# of students in "needs improvement group"	Total # of students
S A, C 1	15	8	7	30
S A, C 2	2	9	8	19
S A, C 3	2	12	3	17
S B, C 1	0	17	4	21
S B, C 2	5	7	3	15
Total in group	34	53	25	102

Appendix D

Home Survey

1. Does your child read at home for pleasure?

Always Sometimes Never

2. Does your child read to you?

Always Sometimes Never

3. Do you read to your child?

Always Sometimes Never

4. Does your child prefer reading by himself/herself?

Always Sometimes Never

5. Does your child try to sound out words that he/she doesn't know?

Always Sometimes Never

6. Approximately how much time does your child read for enjoyment each night?

0 1-10 minutes 10-20 minutes 20 or more minutes

7. How many children's books do you have at home?

less than 10 10-20 more than 20

8. Does your child have a library card?

Yes No

9. How often does your child go to the library?

Often Sometimes Never

10. Does your child have a favorite author?

Yes No

Site A, Classroom 1
Site A, Classroom 2
Site A, Classroom 3
Site B, Classroom 1
Site B, Classroom 2

Home Survey

1. Does your child read at home for pleasure?

Always	Sometimes	Never
30	66	3

2. Does your child read to you?

Always	Sometimes	Never
18	76	5

3. Do you read to your child?

Always	Sometimes	Never
41	56	2

4. Does your child prefer reading by himself/herself?

Always	Sometimes	Never
10	72	17

5. Does your child try to sound out words that he/she doesn't know?

Always	Sometimes	Never
49	46	4

6. Approximately how much time does your child read for enjoyment each night?

0	1-10 minutes	10-20 minutes	20 or more minutes
1	21	66	11

7. How many children's books do you have at home?

less than 10	10-20	more than 20
1	14	84

8. Does your child have a library card?

Yes	No
69	30

9. How often does your child go to the library?

Often	Sometimes	Never
26	55	18

10. Does your child have a favorite author?

Yes	No
38	61

99 total students
(3 surveys not returne

Appendix E

First and Second Grade

Child's Survey

1. Do you enjoy listening to a story?

☺ 😐 ☹

2. Do you read every night?

☺ 😐 ☹

3. Do you like reading?

☺ 😐 ☹

4. Does anyone at home read to you?

☺ 😐 ☹

5. Are a lot of books too hard for you to read?

☺ 😐 ☹

6. Do you try to sound out words that you don't know?

☺ 😐 ☹

Third and Fourth Grade

Child's Survey

1. Do you enjoy listening to a story?

   Always Sometimes Never

2. Do you read every night?

   Always Sometimes Never

3. Do you like reading?

   Always Sometimes Never

4. Does anyone at home read to you?

   Always Sometimes Never

5. Are a lot of books too hard for you to read?

   Always Sometimes Never

6. Do you try to sound out words that you don't know?

   Always Sometimes Never

Site A, Classroom 1
Site B, Classroom 1
Site B, Classroom 2

Child's Survey

1. Do you enjoy listening to a story?

☺	😐	☹
57	5	4

2. Do you read every night?

☺	😐	☹
28	27	11

3. Do you like reading?

☺	😐	☹
46	13	7

4. Does anyone at home read to you?

☺	😐	☹
45	15	6

5. Are a lot of books too hard for you to read?

☺	😐	☹
18	27	21

6. Do you try to sound out words that you don't know?

☺	😐	☹
48	13	5

66 total students

Site A, Classroom 2

Site A, Classroom 3

Child's Survey

1. Do you enjoy listening to a story?

Always	Sometimes	Never
21	14	1

2. Do you read every night?

Always	Sometimes	Never
12	18	6

3. Do you like reading?

Always	Sometimes	Never
15	19	2

4. Does anyone at home read to you?

Always	Sometimes	Never
4	24	8

5. Are a lot of books too hard for you to read?

Always	Sometimes	Never
1	29	6

6. Do you try to sound out words that you don't know?

Always	Sometimes	Never
25	11	0

36 total students

Appendix F

Previous Teacher Evaluation

Name of Student________________________________

1. Did the student have good listening skills (attentive during reading of a story)?

   E M I

2. Did the student answer oral comprehension questions clearly so the other students could understand?

   E M I

3. Was the student able to sequence events from the story?

   E M I

4. Did the student understand the question posed to him/her or did he/she need it to be explained further?

   E M I

5. Did the student answer interpretive questions correctly?

   E M I

6. Was the student able to give literal answers?

   E M I

Previous Teacher Evaluation

Name of Student____________________

1. Did the student have good listening skills (attentive during reading of the story)?

   E M I

2. Did the student answer comprehension questions (orally) clearly so the other students could understand?

   E M I

3. Did the student answer questions (written) to the point and sensibly?

   E M I

4. Did the student understand the question posed to him/her or did he/she need it to be explained further?

   E M I

5. Did the student answer interpretive questions correctly?

   E M I

6. Did the student know how to find (skim for) literal answers?

   E M I

Site A, Classroom 1
Site B, Classroom 1
Site B, Classroom 2

Previous Teacher Evaluation

Name of Student________________________________

1. Did the student have good listening skills (attentive during reading of a story)?

E	M	I
22	22	10

2. Did the student answer oral comprehension questions clearly so the other students could understand?

E	M	I
16	26	12

3. Was the student able to sequence events from the story?

E	M	I
9	40	5

4. Did the student understand the question posed to him/her or did he/she need it to be explained further?

E	M	I
12	35	7

5. Did the student answer interpretive questions correctly?

E	M	I
5	35	14

6. Was the student able to give literal answers?

E	M	I
14	36	4

54 total students
(2 transfers)

Site A, Classroom 2

Site A, Classroom 3

Previous Teacher Evaluation

Name of Student____________________

1. Did the student have good listening skills (attentive during reading of the story)?

E	M	I
11	15	10

2. Did the student answer comprehension questions (orally) clearly so the other students could understand?

E	M	I
6	26	4

3. Did the student answer questions (written) to the point and sensibly?

E	M	I
4	24	8

4. Did the student understand the question posed to him/her or did he/she need it to be explained further?

E	M	I
6	23	7

5. Did the student answer interpretive questions correctly?

E	M	I
3	23	10

6. Did the student know how to find (skim for) literal answers?

E	M	I
9	17	10

36 total students

Appendix G

Anecdotal Record

Student Name ______________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Anecdotal Record

Student Name ______________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Date _______ Comment ______________________________________

Appendix H

Oral Reading Observations

	Reads at an Appropriate Pace	Reads Words Accurately	Sounds Out Words (Decoding)	Self-Corrects

Week	Vocabulary		Fluency		Self-Correcting		Answering Questions	
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								
13.								
14.								
15.								
16.								
17.								
18.								
19.								
20.								
21.								
22.								
23.								
24.								
25.								
26.								
27.								
28.								
29.								
30.								

Appendix I

My Reading Record: Name____________________

Date	Book Title	Author	Read from page___ to page______.
			to
			to
			to
			to
			to
			to
			to
			to
			to
			to
			to

If you are reading the same book over a number of days, you only have to write the title and author once. Fill in the date and the pages read every day.

In class,from time to time I will ask you questions about your book such as:

1. Where did the story take place?
2. What problem did the characters in the book face?
3. What other way might the story have ended?
4. Who was your favorite character in the book?
5. If you read an information book, what did you learn?

Appendix J

NORTHEAST SCHOOL

91st Street and California • Evergreen Park, Illinois 60805 • 708/422-6501

Saint Xavier University
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Improving Reading Comprehension

September 1998

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am participating in a field-based master's program through St. Xavier University this school year. My basic goal is to improve your child's reading achievement. I have designed specific strategies to supplement the reading curriculum. These strategies include: teacher reading a story to the students and the students retelling it, teacher increasing phonemic awareness, students keeping home reading records, and students generating questions.

During the next four months the ways I will be collecting data are through pre and posttests, surveys, and classroom checklists. This data will be written up in an action research paper. Students' identities will be withheld. If you do not wish your child's scores to be included in this project, please contact me. Participation or lack of participation will not adversely affect his/her report card grades.

Thank you for your cooperation in this process. Feel free to call me with any questions.

Sincerely,

I have been informed of the action research project in which my child will participate.

_____I Do

_____I Do Not

give my permission for my child's test scores to be anonymously used in an action research project.

Parent/Guardian Signature:_______________________________

Student Name: _______________________________________

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Appendix K

The cow lives on the farm.

She eats grass all day long.

At night she is very tired.

Then she slowly comes home.

“I want to be milked,” she says.

The farmer milks her.

She is glad to give milk.

The farmer drinks the milk.

His children drink the milk.

Then the cow sleeps in the barn.

Name________________________________

Listen to the story then answer the questions by circling the right answer.

1. Where does the cow live?

field farm meadow

2. What does she do all day?

eat grass drink water sleep

3. Why does she come home at night?

she's sad she's tired she's happy

4. How does the cow feel about being milked?

she doesn't like it she likes it

5. Who milks her?

the children the farmer the woman

6. Who drinks the milk?

the children the cat the dog

7. Where does the cow sleep?

in the barn in the field by the lake

Mary was playing alone at the rear of her house. She was waiting for her father to return. He was going to bring her a birthday present. Then she heard a truck stop nearby. Quickly she ran around to the front.

There was a big truck with its back toward the house. She wondered whether it had brought her present. Her father opened the rear of the truck. Out walked a small brown and white pony. This was her birthday present.

1. Where was Mary playing? (*rear of house or back yard*)
2. Who was she waiting for? (*father*)
3. What did she hear? (*truck stop*)
4. Then what did she do? (*ran to front of house or ran to truck*)
5. What did she see there? (*truck*)
6. What was in the truck? (*pony*)
7. Why did her father bring Mary a pony? (*for birthday*)

2D GRADE 2.8

TIME ________________

ERRORS (13) __________

COMP (4) ____________

COMMENTS:

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Name______________________________

Listen to the story your teacher will read to you and answer the following questions.

1. Where was Mary playing? ______________________________

____

2. Who was she waiting for? ______________________________

____

3. What did she hear? ______________________________

____

4. Then what did she do? ______________________________

____

5. What did she see there? ______________________________

____

6. What was in the truck? ______________________________

____

7. Why did Mary's father bring her a pony? ______________________________

____

One day Bob took a trip to the zoo. First he went to the great big lion house. He was a little frightened when the lions began to roar. The cages were clean, but the lions didn't seem to like them because they kept walking up and down, roaring and switching their tails. Bob was glad that there was a strong fence around the lions.

On the way out of the park, Bob stopped to watch the other animals. He saw a black wolf and a red fox in their cages. The keeper was feeding the wolf from a pail of food. The keeper didn't enter the cage, but he pushed the food through the bars to the wolf.

1. Where did Bob go one day? (*zoo*)
2. What did he visit first? (*lions* or *lion house*)
3. How did he feel when the lions roared? (*frightened* or *afraid*)
4. How did he know that the lions didn't like their cages? (*walked up and down* or *roared* or *switched their tails*)
5. Where did Bob go after the lion house? (*watch other animals*)
6. What other animals did he see? (*wolf* or *fox*)
7. What was happening to them? (*being fed*)
8. Why didn't the keeper go into the cages? (*afraid they'd bite*)

3C GRADE 3.8

TIME ____________

ERRORS (9) ____________

COMP (5) ____________

COMMENTS:

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1. Where did Bob go one day?

2. What did he visit first?

3. How did he feel when the lions roared?

4. How did he know that the lions didn't like their cages?

5. Where did Bob go after the lion house?

6. What other animals did he see?

7. What was happening to them?

8. Why didn't the keeper go into the cages?

4B GRADE 4.5

TIME [illegible]

ERRORS (12) ______

COMP (5) ______

COMMENTS:

Mary's teacher took her class for a nature walk one sunshiny day last week. Every time the group came to a new plant, they would stop and examine it while the teacher explained its parts. She showed them how a bee gets its honey from flowers and how a bug had eaten part of the leaves from some plants. On a few plants, the flowers had fallen off, and seeds had begun to form.

Later, while they were looking at some blossoms, one boy spied a nest hidden in a tree. They were very quiet, hoping that the mother bird would return to feed her young ones. Sure enough, she quickly came back with a fat, juicy worm in her bill. She fed the young ones, chirped a little, and then flew away after more worms. Mary's teacher said that birds eat a great deal every day. They help us by eating insects that would destroy our plants and by eating weed seeds.

1. When did the class go for a nature walk? (*last week* or *sunshiny day*)
2. What did the class do with each new plant? (*look at it*)
3. What did the teacher show them about bugs? (*how bugs eat plants*)
4. What did one boy see in a tree? (*nest*)
5. What did the class do then? (*waited for mother bird* or *kept quiet* or *looked up at the nest*)

*6. What did the mother bird do? (Any two — *brought worm, fed young, flew away, chirped*)

7. Why was the mother bird so busy? (*baby birds eat a lot* or *feeding her babies*)
8. How do birds help us? (*eat insects* or *bugs* or *weed seeds*)

---

*Two facts must be given to receive full credit. Half credit is given for a partial answer. In all other questions, full credit is given for any one of the possible answers.

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Appendix

Auditory Comprehension Post Test

Group - S = site C = class	# of students in "exceeds group"	# of students in "meets group"	# of students in "needs improvement group"	Total # of students
S A, C 1	24	4	0	28
S A, C 2	0	13	6	19
S A, C 3	10	6	1	17
S B, C 1	10	8	2	20
S B, C 2	8	6	1	15
Total in group	52	37	10	99

Appendix L

Publisher Post test

Group - S = site C = class	# of students in "exceeds group"	# of students in "meets group"	# of students in "needs improvement group"	Total # of students
S A, C 1	13	9	6	28
S A, C 2	10	7	2	19
S A, C 3	11	5	1	17
S B, C 1	3	11	6	20
S B, C 2	14	1	0	15
Total in group	51	33	15	99

Appendix M

Beginning

Middle

End

Name____

Tyrone the Horrible

Vocabulary Key Words

Draw a line from the key word to its meaning.

1. avoid	to keep away from
2. chance	problem or problems
3. trouble	way
4. present	very angry
5. furious	opposite of for
6. against	gift

Story Order

Read the sentences below. Then cut out the sentencestrips. Glue the sentence strips in the order the events happened in the story.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Tyrone learns to stay away from from Boland.

Stego tells Boland to stand-up to Tyrone.

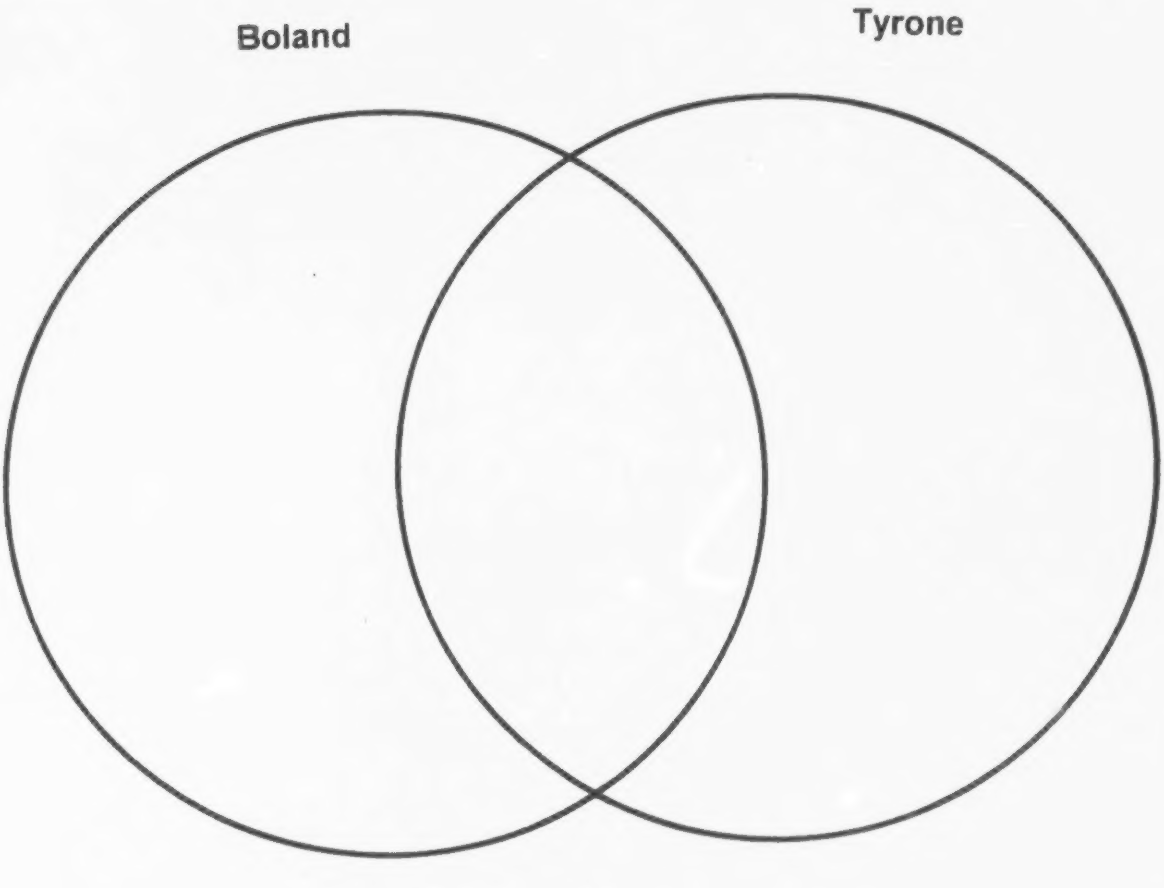
Tyrone the Horrible likes to pick on Boland.

Terry tells Boland to give Tyrone a present.

Boland makes his own plan to stop Tyrone's teasing.

Venn Diagram

Use a Venn diagram to show how Boland and Tyrone are alike and how they are different.


Boland
Tyrone

NAME____________________

LEGEND OF THE INDIAN PAINTBRUSH
COMPREHENSION CHECK

1. What is Little Gopher's special gift?

____

____

____

2. Why is Little Gopher unhappy with his paintings? ____________

____

____

3. How did Little Gopher make his paints?____________________

____

____

4. Why was Little Gopher's name changed to He Who Brought the Sunset to the Earth? ______________________________

____

____

5. What can you learn from Little Gopher? ___________________

____

____

USE THESE WORDS TO COMPLETE THE SENTENCES:

deeds warriors custom gift tribe

6. Little Gopher wanted to hunt and fight like the ______________.

7. His ______________ lived and worked together on the Plain.

8. Little Gopher painted pictures of good ________________ like helping other people.

9. It was a __________________ to wait for a message in a dream.

10. A person who paints well has a _______________ for painting.

COMPREHENSION CHECK
"THE PLANT THAT ATE THE DIRTY SOCKS"

1. Who are the two main characters in this story? Describe each character in looks and actions.

2. Describe the setting of this story Where + when?

3. What does Michael feed his plant? Be specific

4. What does Norman feed his plant? Be specific

5. How were Norman's and Michael's plants different? 2 ways

6. What did Norman do at night so no one would recognize him? Describe how he looked.

7. What is the problem in this story?

8. What do Norman and Michael do to solve the missing-sock mystery? Be specific

9. How was each plant like its owner?

10. Would you rather have Michael or Norman for a friend? Explain why.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix

Teacher Made Post Test

Group - S = site C = class	# of students in "exceeds group"	# of students in "meets group"	# of students in "needs improvement group"	Total # of students
S A, C 1	9	15	4	28
S A, C 2	9	6	4	19
S A, C 3	7	9	1	17
S B, C 1	3	10	7	20
S B, C 2	5	9	1	15
Total in group	33	49	17	99

Appendix N

Post Home Survey

1. Does your child read at home for pleasure?

Always Sometimes Never

2. Does your child read to you?

Always Sometimes Never

3. Do you read to your child?

Always Sometimes Never

4. Does your child prefer reading by himself/herself?

Always Sometimes Never

5. Does your child try to sound out words that he/she doesn't know?

Always Sometimes Never

6. Approximately how much time does your child read for enjoyment each night?

0 1-10 minutes 10-20 minutes 20 or more minutes

7. How many children's books do you have at home?

less than 10 10-20 more than 20

8. Does your child have a library card?

Yes No

9. How often does your child go to the library?

Often Sometimes Never

10. Does your child have a favorite author?

Yes No

Site A, Classroom 1
Site A, Classroom 2
Site A, Classroom 3
Site B, Classroom 1
Site B, Classroom 2

Post Home Survey

1. Does your child read at home for pleasure?

Always	Sometimes	Never
33	66	

2. Does your child read to you?

Always	Sometimes	Never
19	76	4

3. Do you read to your child?

Always	Sometimes	Never
29	64	6

4. Does your child prefer reading by himself/herself?

Always	Sometimes	Never
22	68	9

5. Does your child try to sound out words that he/she doesn't know?

Always	Sometimes	Never
63	35	1

6. Approximately how much time does your child read for enjoyment each night?

0	1-10 minutes	10-20 minutes	20 or more minutes
1	17	59	22

7. How many children's books do you have at home?

less than 10	10-20	more than 20
0	10	89

8. Does your child have a library card?

Yes	No
74	25

9. How often does your child go to the library?

Often	Sometimes	Never
27	63	9

10. Does your child have a favorite author?

Yes	No
55	44

99 total students

Appendix O

First and Second Grade

Child's Post Survey

1. Do you enjoy listening to a story?

☺ 😐 ☹

2. Do you read every night?

☺ 😐 ☹

3. Do you like reading?

☺ 😐 ☹

4. Does anyone at home read to you?

☺ 😐 ☹

5. Are a lot of books too hard for you to read?

☺ 😐 ☹

6. Do you try to sound out words that you don't know?

☺ 😐 ☹

Third and Fourth Grade

Child's Post Survey

1. Do you enjoy listening to a story?

   Always Sometimes Never

2. Do you read every night?

   Always Sometimes Never

3. Do you like reading?

   Always Sometimes Never

4. Does anyone at home read to you?

   Always Sometimes Never

5. Are a lot of books too hard for you to read?

   Always Sometimes Never

6. Do you try to sound out words that you don't know?

   Always Sometimes Never

Site A, Classroom 1
Site B, Classroom 1
Site B, Classroom 2

Child's Post Survey

1. Do you enjoy listening to a story?

☺	😐	☹
44	17	2

2. Do you read every night?

☺	😐	☹
18	41	4

3. Do you like reading?

☺	😐	☹
37	20	6

4. Does anyone at home read to you?

☺	😐	☹
23	33	7

5. Are a lot of books too hard for you to read?

☺	😐	☹
5	45	13

6. Do you try to sound out words that you don't know?

☺	😐	☹
55	7	1

63 total students

Site A. Classroom 2

Site A. Classroom 3

Child's Post Survey

1. Do you enjoy listening to a story?

Always	Sometimes	Never
20	15	3

2. Do you read every night?

Always	Sometimes	Never
12	21	3

3. Do you like reading?

Always	Sometimes	Never
23	8	5

4. Does anyone at home read to you?

Always	Sometimes	Never
12	19	5

5. Are a lot of books too hard for you to read?

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	20	13

6. Do you try to sound out words that you don't know?

Always	Sometimes	Never
22	10	4

36 total students